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VOLUME 2 CHAPTER 8

TSUKIKAGE BABY

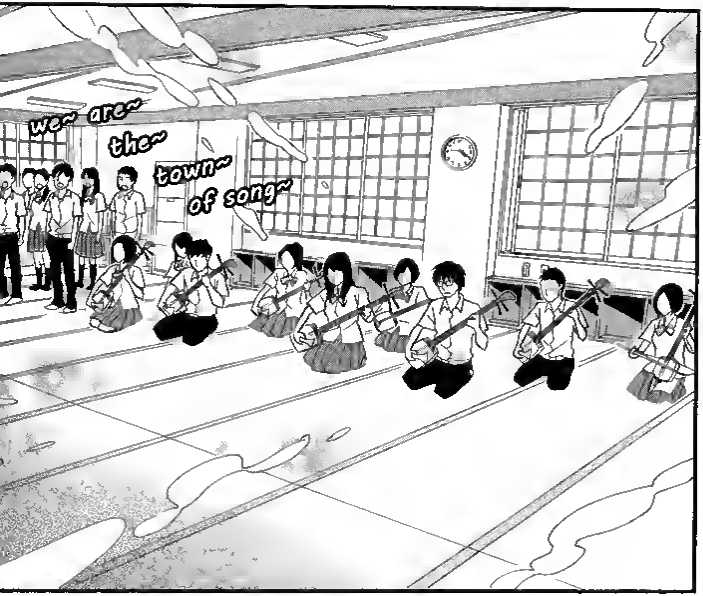
BY KODAMA YUKI

BROUGHT TO YOU BY
stiletto heels
HTTP://WWW.STILETTOHEELSTEAM.NET

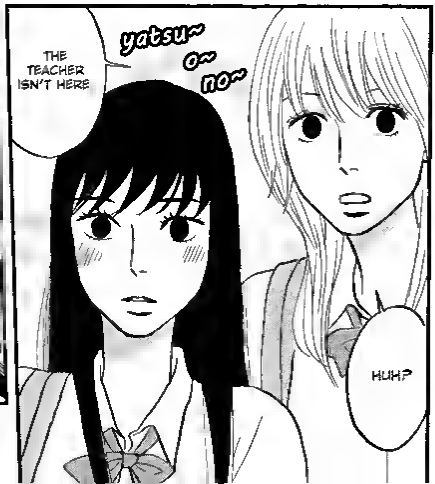
CHAPTER 8

HOTA-RUKO!
THERE'S SOMEWHERE I WANT TO SHOW YA.
BUT, RIO.
DON'T WE HAVE DANCE PRACTICE TODAY...?
I WANT'YA TO COME WITH ME TO SEE.

TL note: Lyrics to Ecchu-Owara Bushi, folk song from Toyama


we~ are~
the~
town~
of song~

I WAS THINKIN' OF INTRODUCIN' YOU TO HIM.
I WONDER WHERE HE WENT.
HEY, IS THIS-

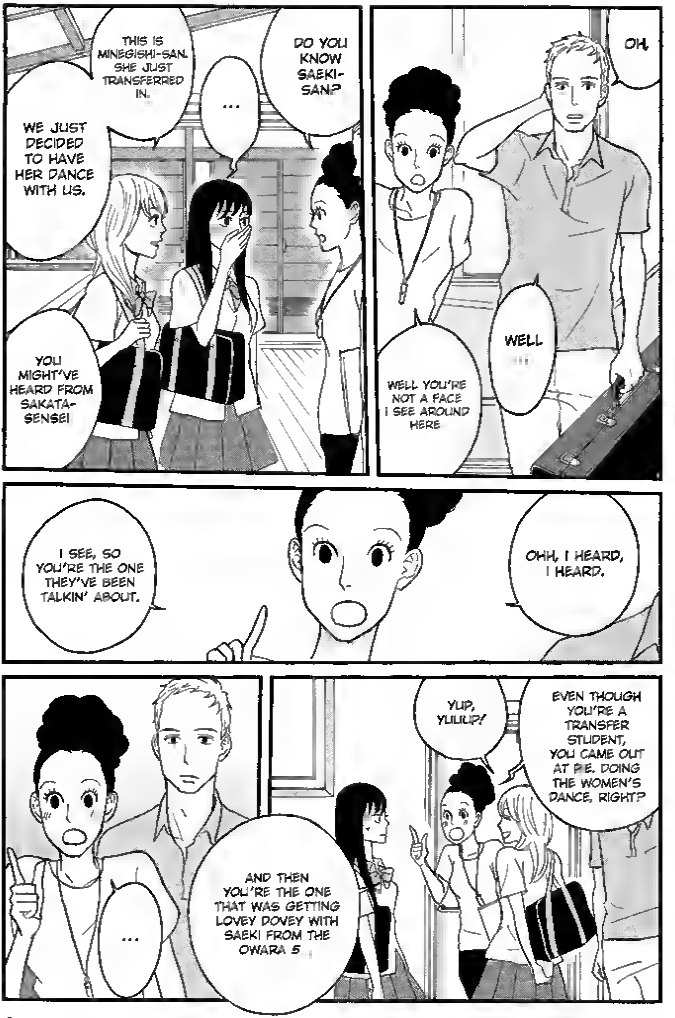

THE TEACHER ISN'T HERE
yatsu~
o~
no~
HUH?

With~ song~
UH... DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE ACCOMPANISTS ARE?
THE STUDENTS AT OUR SCHOOL ALSO PERFORM THE ACCOMPANYING MUSIC
AT FIELD DAY WE DANCE TO THIS, BUT...
OH, YEAH THIS...
...IS THE KYODO PERFORMANCE CLUB THERE PRACTICING THEIR OWARA.
—HAYASHI", I THINK.
THEY SING, PLAY THE SHAMISEN, THE KOKYU, THE TAIKO, AND .
SO THAT'S WHO THE ACCOMPANISTS ARE.
THE DANCING'S THE MOST VISIBLE IN OWARA.
BUT ACTUALLY THE ACCOMPANIMENT HAS A LONGER HISTORY AND IS MORE IMPORTANT.

TL note: These are all pretty specific Japanese instruments/concepts so if you want to know more Google it. The pictures should pretty much tell you what they're playing though

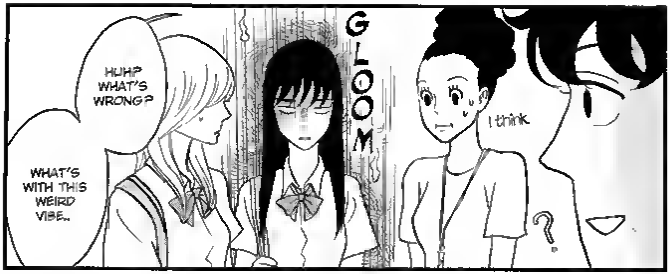
OWARA'S SOMETHING THAT'S COMPLETED WHEN YOU FIRST...
. COMBINE SONG, MUSIC, AND DANCE ALL TOGETHER.
LIVE MUSIC SURE FEELS GOOD
HOTARUKO, HAVE YOU DANCED TO LIVE MUSIC BEFORE?
MATSUI-SAN?
UM.
YES.
SO YOU WERE OUT HERE!
THE DANCERS' GATHERING IN THE BACK ON THE FIRST FLOOR.

OH, SENSEI!
WE WERE LOOKIN' FOR YOU.
SO THIS GIRL...
EH
EH?
WHAT?
WHY-


THIS IS MINEGISHI-SAN. SHE JUST TRANSFERRED IN.
DO YOU KNOW SAEKI-SAN?
...
WE JUST DECIDED TO HAVE HER DANCE WITH US.
YOU MIGHT'VE HEARD FROM SAKATA-SENSEI
OH.
WELL...
WELL YOU'RE NOT A FACE I SEE AROUND HERE
I SEE, SO YOU'RE THE ONE THEY'VE BEEN TALKIN' ABOUT.
OHH, I HEARD, I HEARD.
...
AND THEN YOU'RE THE ONE THAT WAS GETTING LOVEY DOVEY WITH SAEKI FROM THE OWARA 5
YUP, YUUUP!
EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE A TRANSFER STUDENT, YOU CAME OUT AT RIE. DOING THE WOMEN'S DANCE, RIGHT?

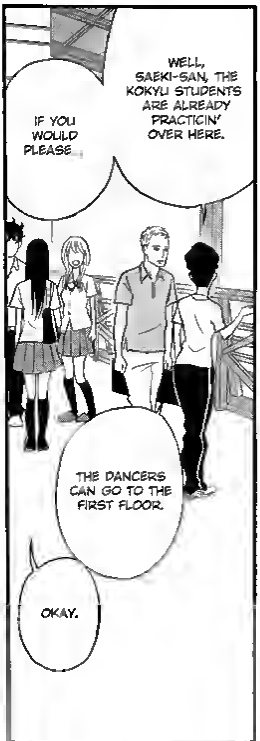
IS THAT YOU?!
IS THAT HOW YOU KNOW EACH OTHER...
OH!
ERM... BY CHANCE
HE'S MY NEPHEW.
WAIT, DOES THIS MEAN THAT HIKARU SAEKI..
..IS SAEKI-SAN'S
HM?
WHOAAAA IT ACTUALLY IS YOU! I WAS SURPRISED
WHY'D YOU COME OUT TO THE SCHOOL?
UNCLE?

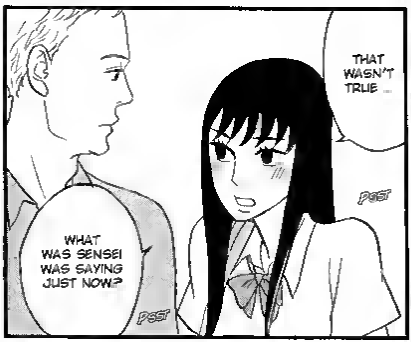
I'M SUBSTITUTING FOR THE MASTER TO TEACH THE KOKYU LESSONS.
I JUST GOT OFF THE PHONE WITH HIM AND HE'S GOT A STRAINED BACK AND CAN'T MOVE.
WELL HE SOUNDED FINE OVER THE PHONE.
BUT SINCE HE'S OLD AND CAN'T PUSH HIMSELF TOO HARD, I'M HERE IN HIS PLACE.
@OSH-
IS HE GOING TO BE OKAY?
WELL,
WOW! DOES THAT MEAN UNCLE'LL BE WITH US UNTIL THE PERFORMANCE!?
YES, I GUESS SO...
Nice!
OH, YOU GUYS WERE HERE TOO
DID YOU HEAR? UNCLE'S GOING TO-


GLOOM
HUH? WHAT'S WRONG?
WHAT'S WITH THIS WEIRD VIBE..
I think
?

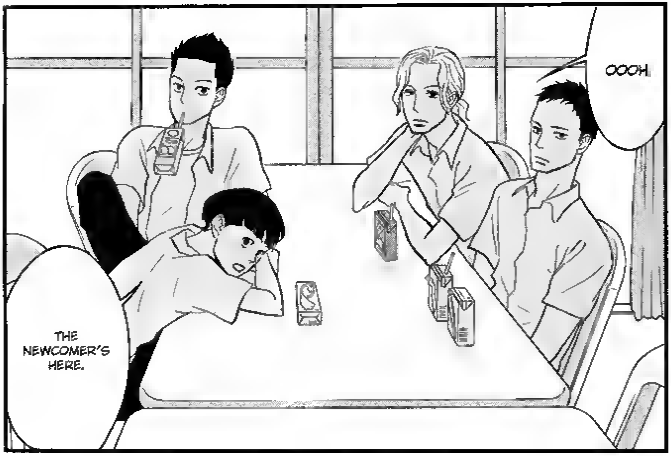
SAY,

LET'S GO, HOTARUKO
HUH?


WELL, SAEKI-SAN, THE KOKYU STUDENTS ARE ALREADY PRACTICIN' OVER HERE.
IF YOU WOULD PLEASE...
THE DANCERS CAN GO TO THE FIRST FLOOR.
OKAY.

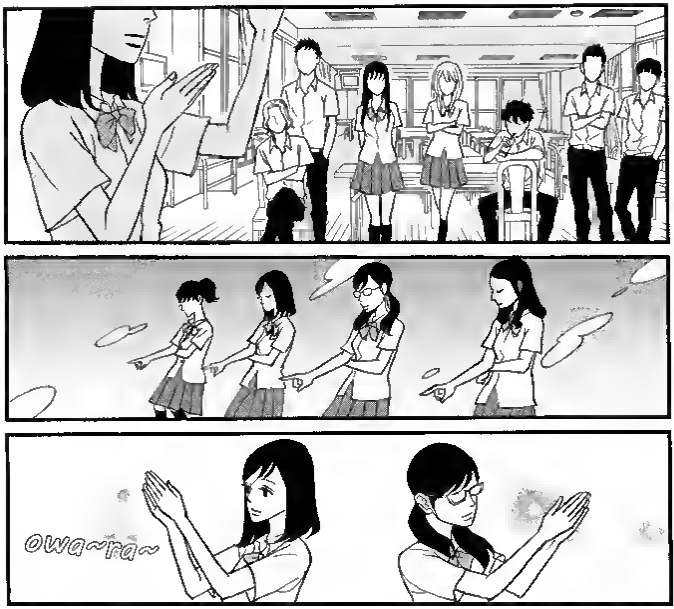

THAT WASN'T TRUE...
PSST
WHAT WAS SENSEI WAS SAYING JUST NOW?
PSST

Thank you for teaching~
Mmm...
I KNOW.

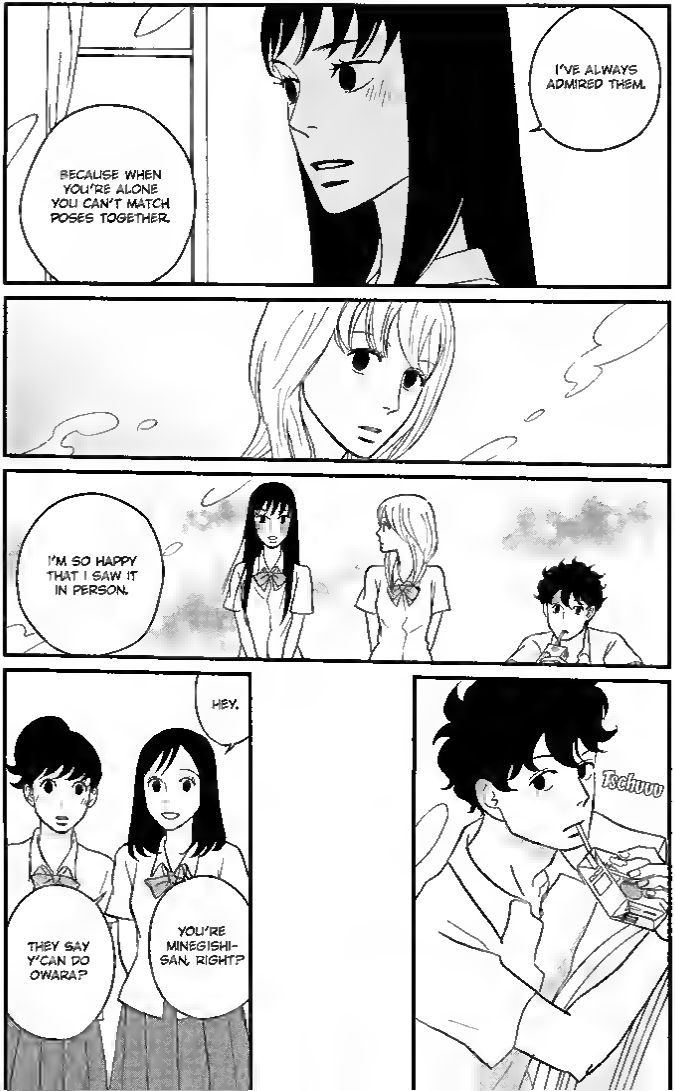

OOOH.
THE NEWCOMER'S HERE.

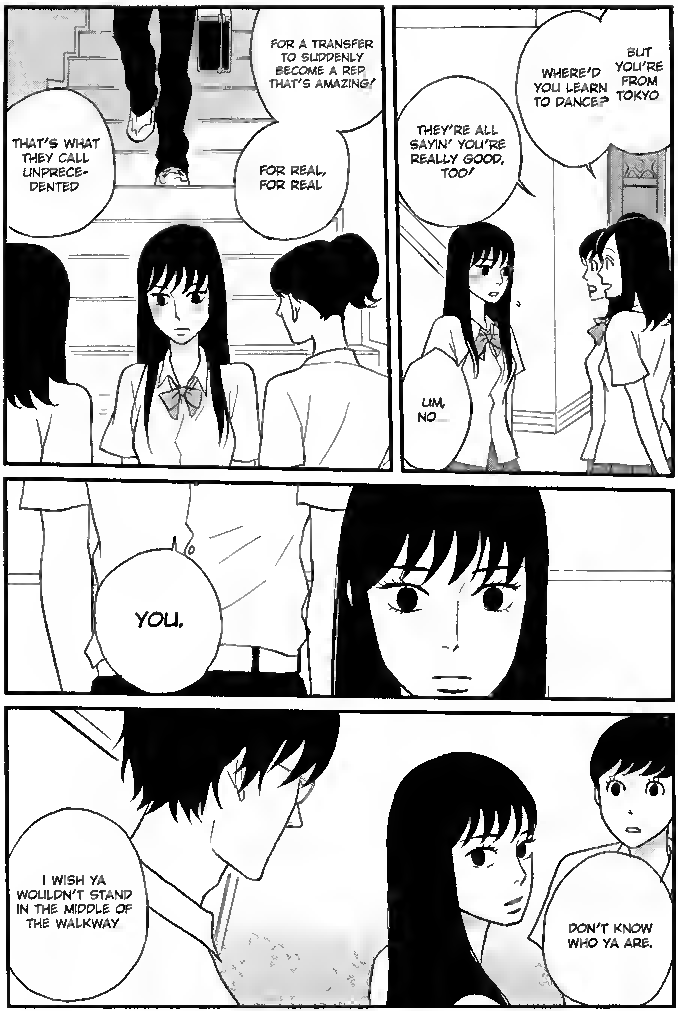
SEPARATE FROM YOU, THEY'LL BE WITH US IN THE FRONT DOING THE STAGE DANCES.
THOSE GIRLS OVER THERE ARE ALSO DANCERS FOR THE KYODO PERFORMANCE CLUB.
OWARA SP
I'M SURE YOU'VE HEARD OF HER FROM SAEKI...
HOTARUKO MINEGISHI.
THEY'RE GONNA DANCE, TOO.
THOSE GIRLS PROBABLY WON'T STAND OUT IN THE CLASS ROOM, BUT...
Hahaha
...WHEN YOU GET 'EM DANCING, YOU'LL SEE...

Ida~
owa~ra~
no~
kaze~

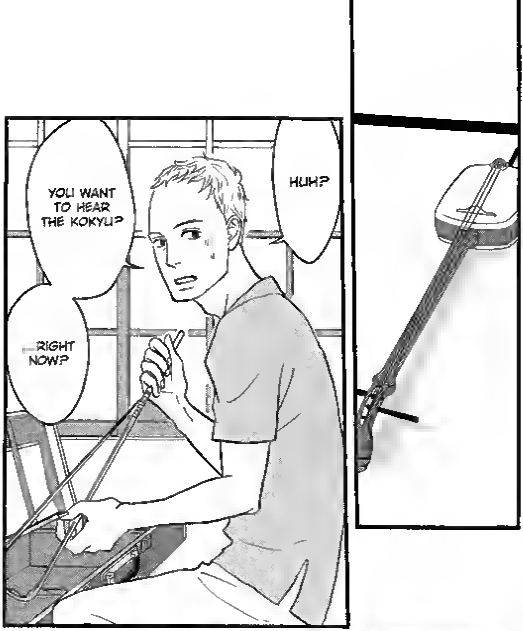

owa~ra~
mushi~

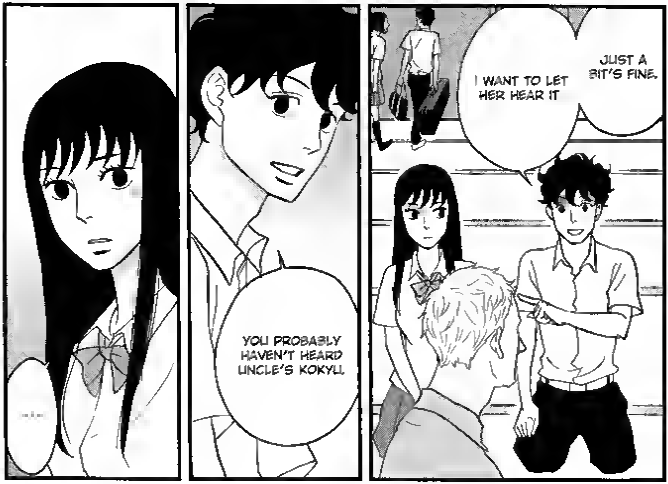
TH-
THIS IS...
THAT'S...
...THE FOUR SEASONS POSE. YOU DON'T KNOW?
THE WOMEN'S DANCE IS SOMETIMES ALSO CALLED "THE FOUR SEASONS DANCE."
BUT FOR THE STAGE DANCE THEY DANCE TO THE LYRICS OF THE SONG "YATSUO SHIKI."
They're doing the Spring and Summer dance right now.
THEY TAKE DIFFERENT POSES FOR THE FOUR SEASONS
THE ONE YOU SAW WAS THE "MACHINAGASHI." IT'S BEEN SHORTENED BUT THE FOUR SEASONS DANCES LOOK LIKE THAT.
FOR ALL THAT DANCING YOU DIDN'T KNOW ANY OF THAT?
UM, YEAH.
I'VE SEEN PICTURES OF IT AT LEAST.
I WAS JUST WATCHING THE WOMEN LINE UP AND CREATE POSES TOGETHER.
I THOUGHT IT LOOKED SO BEAUTIFUL.


I'VE ALWAYS ADMIRED THEM.
BECAUSE WHEN YOU'RE ALONE YOU CAN'T MATCH POSES TOGETHER.
I'M SO HAPPY THAT I SAW IT IN PERSON.
HEY.
YOU'RE MINEGISHI-SAN, RIGHT?
THEY SAY Y'CAN DO O'WARA?
Tschuuu


FOR A TRANSFER TO SUDDENLY BECOME A REP THAT'S AMAZING!
FOR REAL, FOR REAL
THAT'S WHAT THEY CALL UNPRECE-DENTED
BUT YOU'RE FROM TOKYO
WHERE'D YOU LEARN TO DANCE?
THEY'RE ALL SAYIN' YOU'RE REALLY GOOD, TOO!
UM, NO
YOU.
I WISH YA WOULDN'T STAND IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WALKWAY
DON'T KNOW WHO YA ARE.

I WONDER WHY THE CLUB PRESIDENT'S SO GRUMPY.
YEAH...
OYE, HOTARUKO!
THE ACCOMPANIST'S ARE DONE WITH THEIR PRACTICE!
LET'S GO UPSTAIRS.
JUST C'MON.
WHAT'S GOING ON?
YOU'RE IN THE WAY.
Stare
SORRY...
OH... S-...

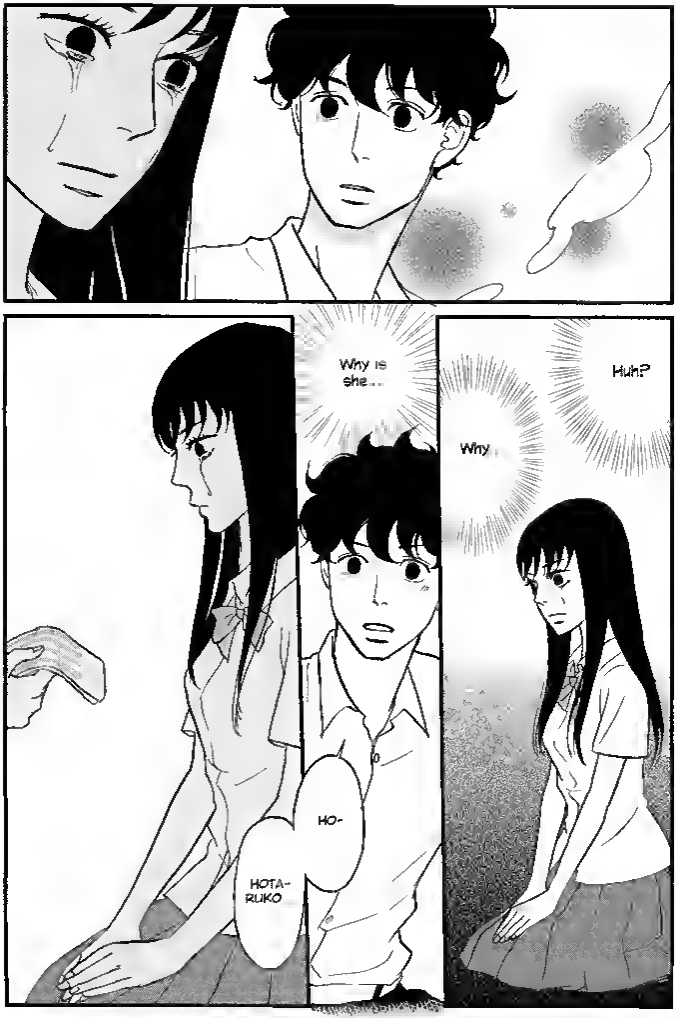

HUH?
YOU WANT TO HEAR THE KOKYU?
RIGHT NOW?

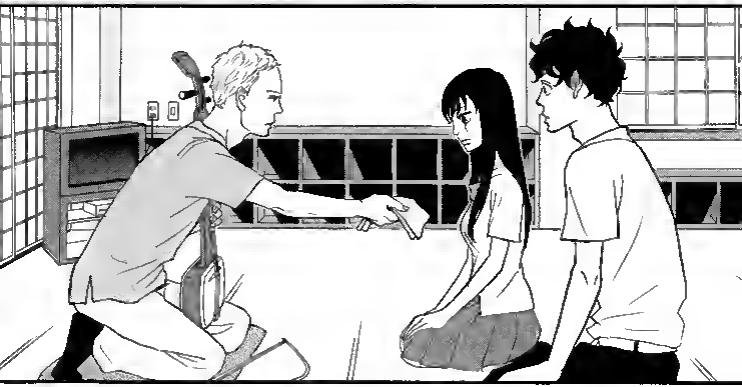

...
YOU PROBABLY HAVEN'T HEARD UNCLE'S KOKYU.
I WANT TO LET HER HEAR IT
JUST A BIT'S FINE.

I'VE GROWN UP LISTENING TO UNCLE'S KOKYU, EVER SINCE I WAS LITTLE.
IN OUR TOWN THERE'S A BUNCH OF FOLKS FAMOUS FOR THEIR KOKYU.
BUT I THINK UNCLE'S KOKYU IS THE BEST OF THEM.
YOU'LL GET GOOSEBUMPS I'M TELLIN' YA.
FINE...
JUST A LITTLE BIT, OKAY.
YAY!!
Slide

Uncle's kokyuu really the best...
The top of my head is tingling.
I can feel it reverberating through my entire body.

En-kun
Scratch this Review!
HEARING THIS KIND OF PERFORMANCE...
HOTARUKO MIGHT BE GOING CRAZY RIGHT NOW
Hold on
Hm?
Peek
WAS THIS NOT THE RIGHT THING TO DO ?


Why is she...
Huh?
Why...
HO-
HOTA-RUKO



EH-
OH.

LET'S CALL IT A DAY.
I ONLY SAID I'D PLAY IT A LITTLE, ANYWAYS.
TAKE IT.

I mean I'm curious about what made Hotaruko cry.
but why does it seem like uncle...
What was that...
...just now?
...that she would cry?
...knew from the beginning...
ktump

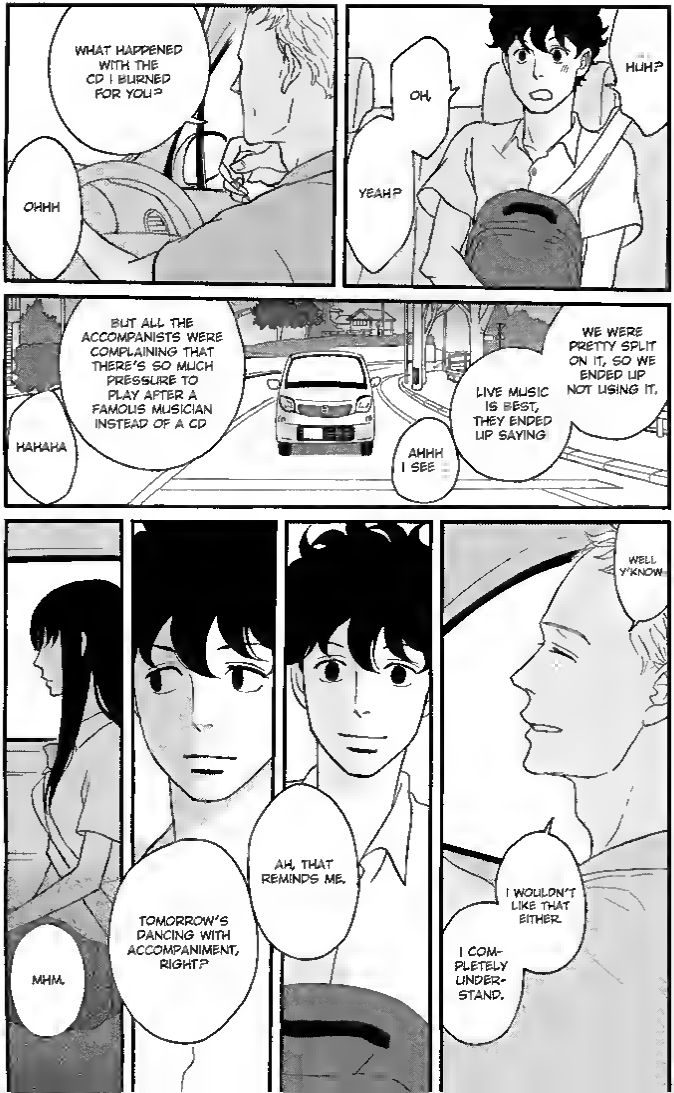
OH.
WELL IN THAT CASE
I CAME HERE BY CAR TODAY.
WHY DON'T YOU ALL RIDE?
ALRIGHT.
LET'S GO HOME
JUST SEND HOTARUKO HOME.
I'M FINE, I'LL WALK.
ACTUALLY
...

Now they can have their secret conversations.
...between those two.
This is best.
I'm just an intruder...
...HUH..?
THE OWARA S ALREADY WENT HOME
Scratch
Scratch
WAIT...
WHAT AM I GETTING ALL DOWN FOR?

HEY, LOOK...
ISN'T THAT...

Dash
HEY UNCLE!
HOLD ON!
LET ME IN, TOO.
IT'S TOO ANNOYING TO WALK, AFTER ALL.
VROOM
SLAM
BOTH OF YOU GET IN
LET'S GET GOING.
WELL,
YOU SHOULD'VE SAID SO FROM THE BEGINNING.

WHAT AM I DOIN'
RATTLE RATTLE
VROOOOM
HIKARU.


WHAT HAPPENED WITH THE CD I BURNED FOR YOU?
OHHH
OH,
YEAH?
HUH?
BUT ALL THE ACCOMPANISTS WERE COMPLAINING THAT THERE'S SO MUCH PRESSURE TO PLAY AFTER A FAMOUS MUSICIAN INSTEAD OF A CD
HAHAHA
AHHH I SEE
LIVE MUSIC IS BEST, THEY ENDED UP SAYING
WE WERE PRETTY SPLIT ON IT, SO WE ENDED UP NOT USING IT.
TOMORROW'S DANCING WITH ACCOMPANIMENT, RIGHT?
MHM.
AH, THAT REMINDS ME,
WELL Y'KNOW
I WOULDN'T LIKE THAT EITHER.
I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND.

I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEIN' YOUR DANCING
YOU THREE WILL BE DANCING TOGETHER, RIGHT?
YEAH
while Hotaruko's still quiet
Uncle is...
...chatting like he wants to avoid any silence.
If I talked to her or touched her right now,
I feel like...
...something would break

I don't have a choice but to stay quiet.

...cloak for her
to hide behind.
Right now,
I'm just a...

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VOLUME 2 CHAPTER 9

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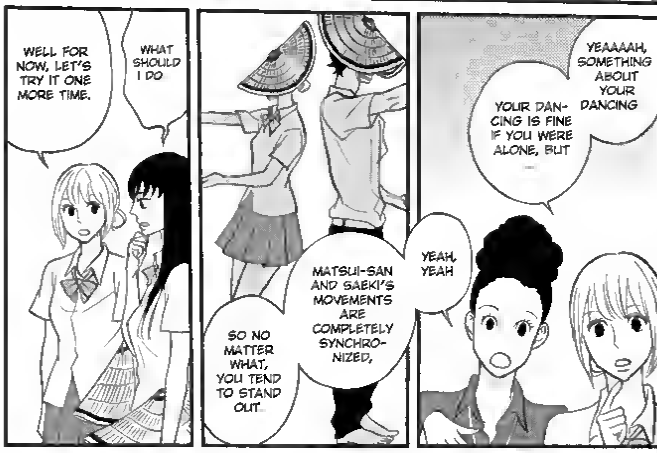
CHAPTER 9

NO KIDDIN'!
SHE REALLY IS GOOD.
YOU WOULDN'T THINK FOR A BIT SHE'S A TRANSFER STUDENT.
YEAH.
BUT SHE STILL CAN'T MATCH UP WITH THE KIDS WHO'VE BEEN DANCING SINCE THEY WERE SMALL, EH.
YEAH.
SHE MUST BE ONE OF THOSE TYPES OF KIDS.

STR
RUM
THEY CALL THEM, "PRODIGIES," RIGHT?

MINEGISHI-SAN, GOOD JOB!
YOU WERE MUCH BETTER THAN I IMAGINED!

UM, REAL-LY?
BUT THERE'RE STILL SOME PARTS YOU DIDN'T GET.


WELL FOR NOW, LET'S TRY IT ONE MORE TIME.
WHAT SHOULD I DO
MATSUI-SAN AND SAEKI'S MOVEMENTS ARE COMPLETELY SYNCHRO-NIZED,
SO NO MATTER WHAT, YOU TEND TO STAND OUT.
YEAAAAH, SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR DANCING
YOUR DAN-CING IS FINE IF YOU WERE ALONE, BUT
YEAH, YEAH

LET'S GO DOWN STAIRS THEY'RE ANNOYING ANYWAYS...
IT SEEMS LIKE THE OWARA S ARE STARTING THEIR FREE PRACTICES...
Hona really?
I'll try to hold it for 3 minutes
OKAY
ALTHOUGH I'VE ALREADY MADE PLANS FOR TODAY...
.... HM?
DON'T BLEND IN LIKE IT'S NOTHING!
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE OVER HERE!
Don't Truth me!
HUH?
WAIT, SAEKI!
As if you have time to be playing around!
OH

AH.
NO PROB-LEM.
...FOR THIS.
THANK YOU.
EXCUSE ME.
APPROACH
I'M ALL RIGHT NOW
SO DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME.
...

HEY
CAN YOU COME?
YEAH.
TRANSFER, WHAT WAS THAT JUST NOW?
YOU WERE JUST TALKING TO MR. SAEKI CASUALLY, WEREN'T YOU?
NO-NO,
MY UNCLE TREATS HER LIKE HIS OWN DAUGHTER, SO SHE JUST
SHE KNOWS MY UNCLE, SO...
YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO SPEAK POLITELY, EITHER.
OH,
IT'S ISHI-ZAKI.

TL note: In Japan, there are different ways of speaking that show different levels of respect or types of relationship. Normally talking to a teacher or an elder you speak "politely," not "casually."

I DON'T WANT YOU STEPPING FOOT IN OUR PRACTICE ROOMS
I DON'T CARE HOW SPOILED YOU WERE BEING RAISED UP, BUT...
...HOW ABOUT YOU STUDY UP ON HOW TO SPEAK PROPERLY?
WHOA WHOA, ISHIZAKI.
SHE DIDN'T MEAN ANY HARM, SO LEAVE IT AT THAT..
HEH, TRYING TO COVER FOR HER...
HOW NOBLE.
NUUH?
JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE A BIT GOOD AT DANCING..
..DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULD BE FULL OF YOURSELF.

KTUP.
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
DON'T WORRY ABOUT HIM
HE'S JUST A BIT HARD-HEADED
KIND OF LIKE ME.
IT'S TRUE THAT 'ROUND HERE YOU'VE GOTTA KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR MANNERS,
AND I GUESS UNCLE'S HERE AS AN INSTRUCTOR
ALL RIGHT! I'M GONNA SPEAK POLITELY TO UNCLE, TOO!
NO WAY YOU'LL DO IT.
WHAT?
I can totally do it!
I don't see it.

I WANT TO TEACH YOU MORE BUT...
...I'VE GOT TO RUN
WHEW.
Beep
OKAY.
THANKS!
SORRY, BUT I'LL TRAIN YOU HARD, TOMORROW!
SAEKI-SAN, RIGHT?
HEY DID YOU SEE THAT JUST NOW?
I wanna eat icecream
YEAH, I SAW THAT AND IT MADE MY HEART POUND
REALLY ??
ME TOO, ME TOO!
DIDN'T YOU THINK SAEKI-SAN KIND OF FELT DIFFERENT THAN LISUAL?
I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN-
YOU KNOW,
I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST ME IMAGINING THINGS BUT .
WHEN HE LOOKS AT HER...

TL note: She just chillin'. Just sitting on the bench. Doing literally nothing in a hallway with nothing. Not even a window. Just sittin. The author said, "Man idk what she'd be doing. Maybe she's just doing nothing. That's easy to draw."

EH?

WHA?!
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE-
SHH, LISTEN TO ME.
THE GIRLS IN THE BACK OF THE CAFETERIA ARE GOSSIPING
ABOUT YOU AND UNCLE.
IF YOU DON'T WANT BAD RUMORS FLOATING AROUND ABOUT HIM,
JUST STAY STILL FOR A SECOND.

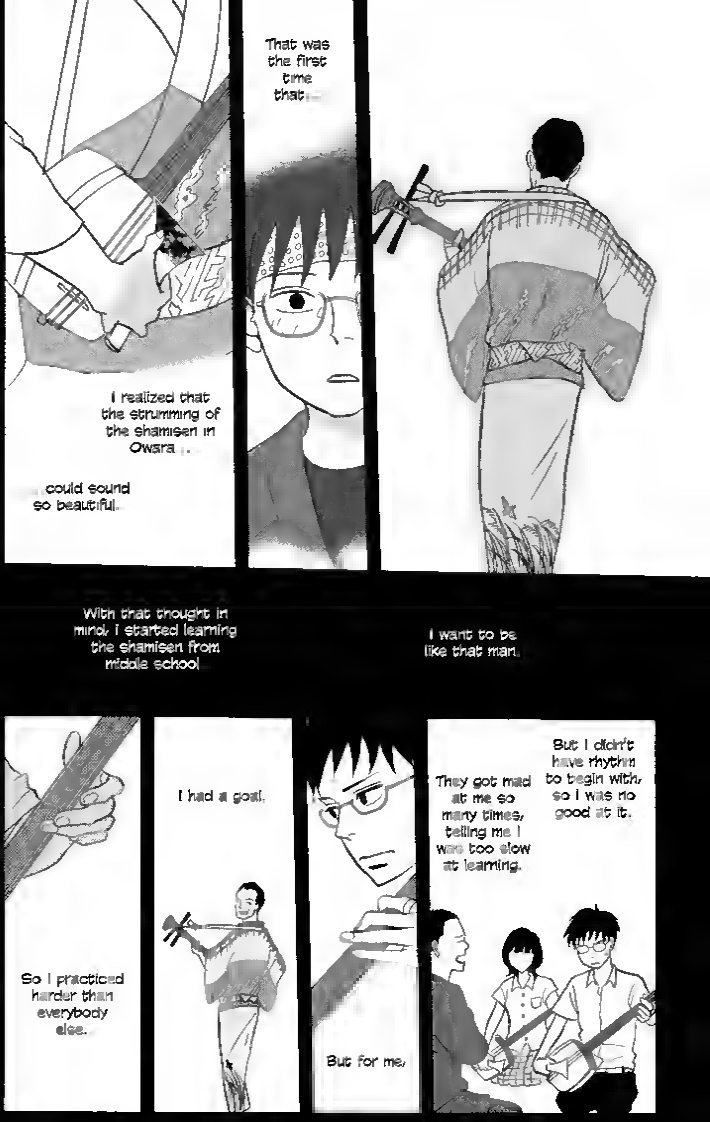
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE HAVE TO-
SHH!
HUH?
I GUESS I WAS JUST IMAGINING THINGS AFTER ALL?
I GUESS SO...
HEY,
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE TO GET THIS CLOSE TO ME, DOES IT?
HM?
HUH? FOR REAL?
EVEN IF WE WERE GOING OUT, WE WOULDN'T GET SO CLOSE TO EACH OTHER IN FRONT OF OTHERS, RIGHT?
SO HOW ABOUT LIKE THIS?
...
I DON'T KNOW, WHATEVER!

HAHA.
I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO LEAVE, BUT "LAST QUESTION TIME" JUST DIDN'T SEEM TO END...
WAS IT ISHIZAKI AGAIN?
HE ALWAYS WANTS AN ANSWER FOR EVERYTHING, YOU KNOW?
NO IT'S ALRIGHT
HEEYY!
SORRY IT TOOK ME A WHILE.
THANKS FOR WAITING, SAEKI-SAN!

HE'S A HARD WORKER.
BUT IT'S OKAY, BECAUSE HE'S SO PASSIONATE.
EVEN OUT OF THE KYODO PERFORMANCE CLUB HE PRACTICES THE MOST.
He's already in a trance state...
Yup. Nobody could stop him.
CLUB PRES, WE'RE HEADING HOME.
GOOD WORK.

Strum
I was so frustrated, always being left behind.
Ever since I was small I wasn't good at dancing.
WHY WON'T YA DANCE?
DO YOU DISLIKE OWARA?
HATE IT
OWARA CAN JUST DISAPPEAR.
FUHA-HAHA!
YOU SAY IT SO STRAIGHT!

IT'S OKAY. I'M STILL HOLDING IT UP.
WHAT IF HE DROPS IT?
BUT THAT'S YOUR PRECIOUS SHAMI-SEN!
PUT THIS ROUND YOUR NECK.
HEHY
YOU LOOK GOOD WITH A SHAMISEN.
WHEN I WAS LITTLE, I HATED DANCING SO MUCH, TOO.
Y'KNOW,
THAT MAKES US TWO OF A KIND
おわら
おわら


That was the first time that...
I realized that the strumming of the shamisen in Owara...
...could sound so beautiful.
With that thought in mind, I started learning the shamisen from middle school.
I want to be like that man.
But I didn't have rhythm to begin with, so I was no good at it.
They got mad at me so many times, telling me I was too slow at learning.
But for me,
I had a goal.
So I practiced harder than everybody else.

...finally grew into the ability to play the shamisen,
Hard work upon hard work...
Damn "prodigy"
...come to tell me that my efforts have been for naught?
Has that city dweller with no manners and no greetings...
..can ever compete with a "genius?"
To tell me that no amount of hard work...

Freeze
!
WAIT-
DID I PUT MY PICK.
...IN THE CASE?

HUH?
I'VE NEVER HAD TO COME BACK BECAUSE I FORGOT MY PICK.
NOT GOOD I'VE BEEN SPACING OUT.
WHERE'D I PUT THAT KEY YOU JUST GAVE BACK TO ME?
...TOGETHER WITH A GIRL.
A KID NAMED SAEKI JUST BORROWED THAT KEY..
OH/
AND SPEAKING OF A GIRL
I THOUGHT HE WENT HOME RIGHT AFTER THAT
SAEKI DID ?

...Huh?
Eh?
What?
What are they~
THAT'S GOOD...
OKAY AND NOW...
.. OPEN THEM UP JUST A BIT MORE.
LIKE THIS..?
RIGHT THERE
STOP...
KEEP GOING WITH YOUR HIPS.
YEAH.
JUST A BIT LOWER.
KTU!?
IN SUCH A SACRED PLACE, THEY'RE-
W-W-WHAT DOES THAT SAEKI THINK HE'S DOING!
BEAUTIFUL, JUST BEAUTIFUL!

GOT IT.
RIO'S ARM WAS ANGLED LIKE THAT, I THINK.
YOUR HIPS ARE IN THE RIGHT PLACE, TOO
HMMM.... WHAT ELSE WAS OFF, HM ...
WELL, WHATEVER.
LET'S RUN THROUGH IT AGAIN.
Self-disgust

Her movements...
Graceful, soft...
She doesn't put any extra strength
...really are pretty...
...Is she able to move like that!?
How...

HOLD ON
HOW LONG DO THEY PLAN ON DANCING FOR?
THOSE TWO
Drip
JUST A BIT MORE...
HOTARU-KO?
IS THAT ALRIGHT
LET'S DO ONE MORE RUN, AND THEN WE'LL CALL IT A DAY.
WE'VE STARTED TO LINE UP.

I ALWAYS FORGET SO QUICKLY...
...WHAT PEOPLE TELL ME TO FIX.
SO I HAVE TO KEEP DOING IT UNTIL MY BODY REMEMBERS THE MOVEMENTS.
I WANT TO DANCE A BIT MORE...
MY MOM ALWAYS USED TO TELL ME,
YOU'RE SLOW AT LEARNING,
SO YOU'VE GOT TO WORK TWICE AS HARD AS EVERYBODY ELSE
BUT TWICE AS HARD AS... WHO?
IN TOKYO THERE WAS NO OTHER KIDS AROUND THAT DANCED THE OWARA.
I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE BASIC.

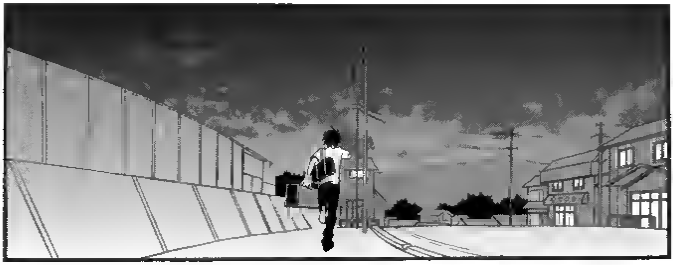
I DIDN'T KNOW,
SO I HAD NO CHOICE
BUT TO KEEP DAN-CING.
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO ASK YOU BUT,
YOUR MOTHER,
SINCE SHE COULD DANCE THE OWARA WAS SHE ONE OF THE YATSUO FOLKS?
... SAY,
I GET IT
...

BAM!
Roll!!!
IF SO, THEN-
HOW LONG DO YOU PLAN ON GOING?!
YOU TWO TAKE A REST ALREADY!
HUH? SINCE WHEN WERE YOU THERE, ISHIGAKI?
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
LOOK AT THE CLOCK
WHOA
Already 9
THE TEACHER ON WATCH ALREADY CAME AROUND A LONG TIME AGO

I TOLD HER I'D CLOSE UP FOR HER.
AND I ASKED IF SHE COULD LET YOU TWO PRACTICE FOR A LITTLE LONGER.
OH, NO KIDDING?
THANKS FOR THAT.
...
I'M PRETTY APPALLED ACTUALLY.
I WAS WATCHING YOU PRACTICE BUT,
EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE A TRANSFER STUDENT,
WHO WOULD'VE THOUGHT YOU'D BE SUCH A OWARA NUT.
BUT, UH...
DON'T GET ME WRONG. THOSE WERE WORDS OF PRAISE

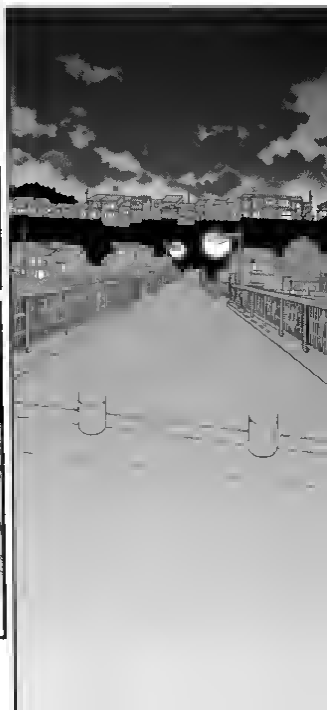
Stop
Turn
I'LL GIVE YOU THE KEYS.
SEE-
SEE YOU LATER.
YOU'D BETTER BE PREPARED FOR THE ACTUAL PERFOR-MANCE!
I-
I WON'T LOSE, THOUGH!

I don't know why, but...
KARAK!
Roll
Roll
...I'm really excited...
...for some reason...
I've got to work harder, too.
I've got to work hard.



I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO FIELD DAY!
IT'S ALMOST HERE!

RIGHT?



THIS GIRL...
NORMALLY SHE DOESN'T SMILE AT ALL.
YES...
It's bad for my heart.
It always surprises me when she does smile...
HOTARUKO,
SAY,
OUR PERFORMANCE AT FIELD DAY...
LET'S DO IT RIGHT, NO MATTER WHAT.

Tap
OKAY?
I ALREADY KNOW THAT!
HEY, WHY ARE WE RUNNING?
IT'S EXERCISE
FOR FIELD DAY, Y'KNOW?
THAT MAKES NO SENSE.
Chu-ring
Chu-ring
Chu-ring

TairaBox
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Megan
PROOF READER

Hatsumumu
QUALITY CHECKER

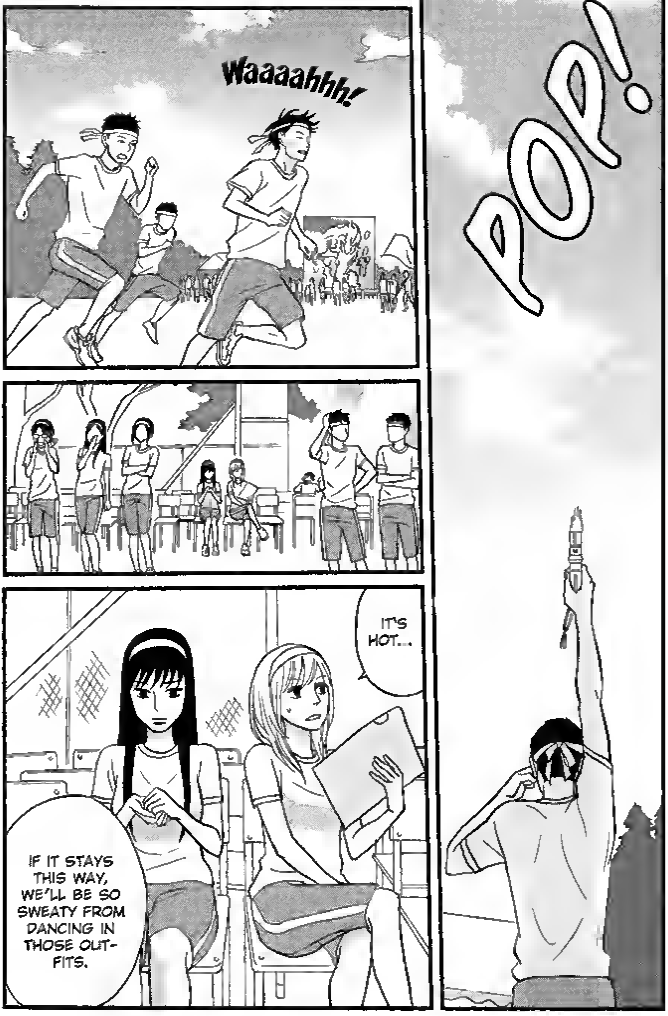
VOLUME 2 CHAPTER 10

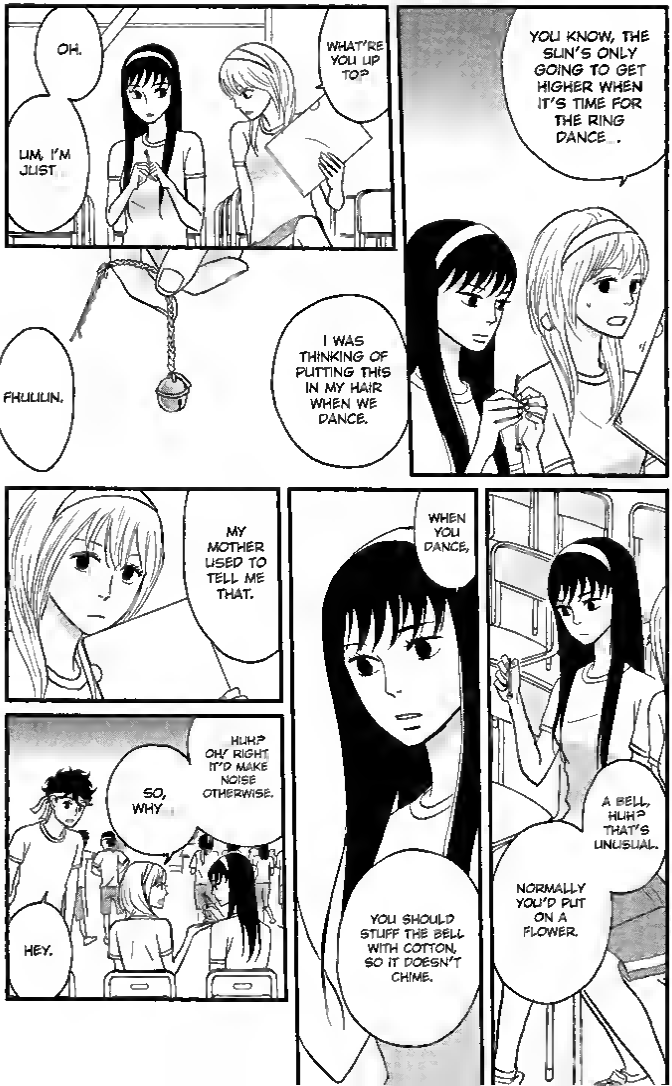
TSUKIKAGE BABY

BY KODAMA YUKI

BROUGHT TO YOU BY
stiletto heels
HTTP://WWW.STILETTOHEELSTEAM.NET

CHAPTER
10


POP!
Waaaahhh!
IT'S HOT...
IF IT STAYS THIS WAY, WE'LL BE SO SWEATY FROM DANCING IN THOSE OUTFITS.


YOU KNOW, THE SUN'S ONLY GOING TO GET HIGHER WHEN IT'S TIME FOR THE RING DANCE.
I WAS THINKING OF PUTTING THIS IN MY HAIR WHEN WE DANCE.
FHUUUIN.
WHAT'RE YOU UP TO?
OH.
UM, I'M JUST
WHEN YOU DANCE,
A BELL, HUH? THAT'S UNUSUAL.
NORMALLY YOU'D PUT ON A FLOWER.
YOU SHOULD STUFF THE BELL WITH COTTON, SO IT DOESN'T CHIME.
MY MOTHER USED TO TELL ME THAT.
HUH? OH! RIGHT IT'D MAKE NOISE OTHERWISE.
SO, WHY
HEY.

WHOOSH
HOTARUKO, YOU'RE IN THE RELAY, RIGHT?
TIME TO GET OUT THERE.
AFTER YOU'RE DONE RUNNING, GET READY FOR THE RING DANCE
OK.
CLUTCH

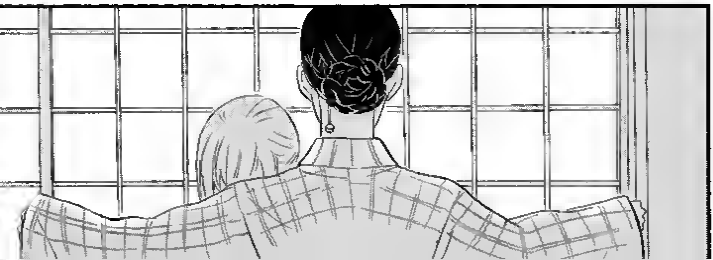
WHA-
Ooooooo!
SO FAST!
SHE JUST PASSED 5 PEOPLE!
WHOA! WHOA! WE HAD SUCH TALENT AT OUR SCHOOL?
HEY, ISN'T SHE YOUR GIRL-FRIEND?
CAN WE HAVE HER AT THE TRACK AND FIELD CLUB?
ZOOM

HUH?
YOU CAN'T HAVE HER.
What did I say...just now?
...HM?
...
Sooo?

Well, whatever.
ALL THE DANCERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE RELAY, HURRY UP!
IF YOU DON'T HURRY AND CHANGE QUICKLY, YOU WON'T MAKE IT!
HOTARUKO,
DO YOU LIKE TRACK?
NOT REALLY.
THAT'S FINE.
HAVE RIO HELP YOU PUT ON THE OUTFITS
SHE'S USED TO PUTTING THEM ON.
OKAY.

YOU'RE LATE.
SORRY!
WE RAN OVER HERE AS SOON AS THE RELAY ENDED
HAH. SEEMS JUST LIKE YOU, ATHLETIC TYPES.
SURE HAVE IT ROUGH, HUH?
ANYWAYS HURRY UP AND GET CHANGED AND GET OVER HERE.
DON'T RUSH INTO MAKING ANY MISTAKES.
HAHA.
HEY DON'T GET SO TENSE AND SCREW UP, YOURSELF!
LET'S GO HOTARUKO.

TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
...!!
HUH ?!
THAT T-SHIRT'S CUTE.
MABU...
Kyoda Performance Club
GRR! DO YOU THINK GUYS WILL BE HAPPY BEING CALLED CUTE?!
blush
PRES', CALM DOWN
SHE WAS TALKING ABOUT THE SHIRT, RIGHT?



R-...
REALLY?
...LOOK SO DIFFERENT WHEN YOU PUT YOUR HAIR UP
HOTARUKO, YOU..
YOU LOOK LIKE SUCH A FINE WOMAN.
YOU LOOK SO CALM AND SHARP
BUT REALLY,
THE BLACK OBI YUKATA FITS YOU SO WELL.
EVEN A GIRL LIKE ME CAN'T HELP BUT THINK YOU'RE PRETTY
YOU'RE SAYING I DON'T NORMALLY LOOK LIKE THAT?
HAHAHA.
SO..

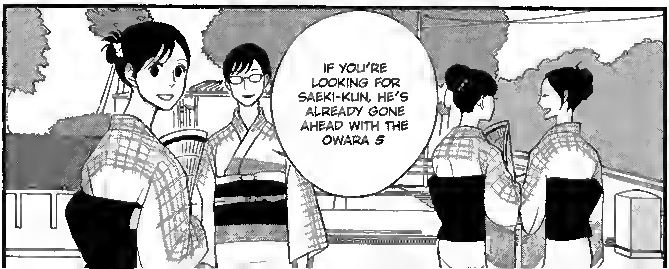
IF SAEKI SAW.
..YOU LIKE THIS, HE'D FALL FOR YOU ALL OVER AGAIN.
THAT'S NOT...
..REALLY TRUE..
tattle
MATSUI-SAN
WHEN YOU'RE DONE, COME ON DOWN.
OH, OK!
WE'LL BE RIGHT DOWN.
LET'S GO
WE'RE THE LAST ONES

EH.
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
HOTARU-KO...

HUH?
OKAY
L-
LET'S GO, RIO

THANKS FOR WAITING! LET'S GO.
THE ACCOMPANISTS ARE WAITING!

"MADOKA-KUN."

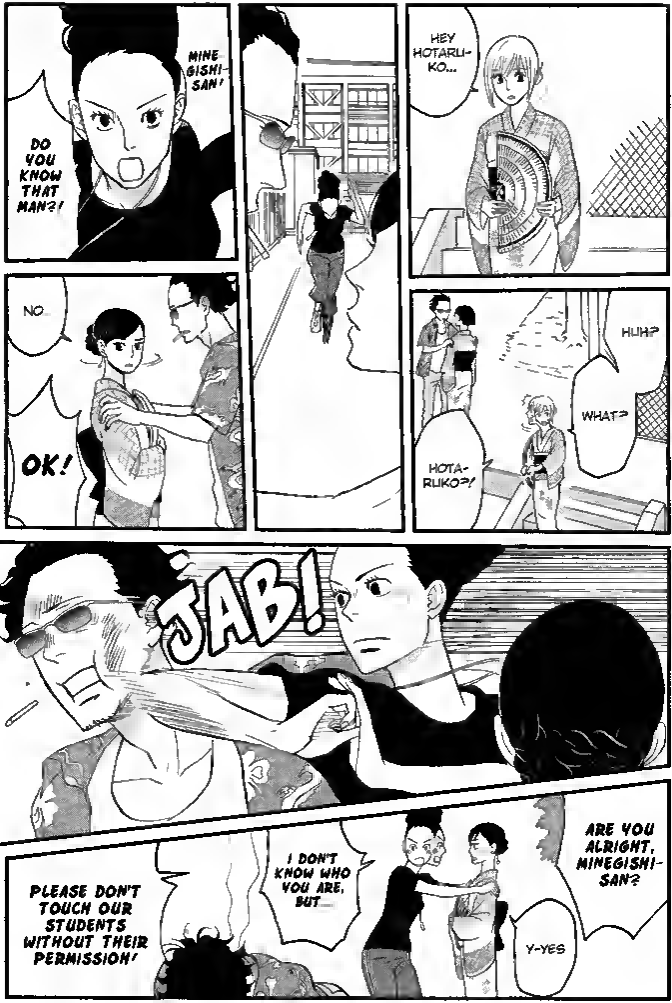

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR SAEKI-KUN, HE'S ALREADY GONE AHEAD WITH THE OWARA S

...
... WHAT HIS FACE WILL LOOK LIKE AFTER SEEING YOU, Y'KNOW?
I WANT TO SEE.
THANKS
OKAY
HOTARUKO
HEY,
ARE YOU REALLY DATING SAEKI?
Stop...

IT-
MHMM.
IT'S TRUE, OKAY?
I'M TELLING THE TRUTH!
OKAY, OKAY, I GOT IT.
GOT IT.
NEVER-MIND, THEN
YES ! WE ARE...P
WHY..P

DROP.
grab!

MAYU-...
...-KO?
EXCUSE ME, WHO ARE YOU...?
AND WHY DO YOU KNOW..
...THAT NAME?

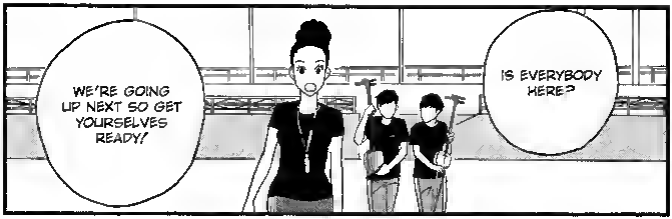

MINEGISHI-SAN!
DO YOU KNOW THAT MAN?!
HEY HOTARU-KO...
NO
OK!
HUH?
WHAT?
HOTA-RUKO?!
JAB!
PLEASE DON'T TOUCH OUR STUDENTS WITHOUT THEIR PERMISSION!
I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, BUT...
ARE YOU ALRIGHT, MINEGISHI-SAN?
Y-YES

SO STINGY
NOT LIKE I GRABBED HER BOOBS, OR ANYTHING
Boob's...
H-
HOW RUDE! AND WHO MIGHT YOU BE?!
I AIN'T ANYBODY, OKAY...?
NON-PARTICIPANTS ARE NOT ALLOWED!
ARE YOU A PARENT?!
NAH, I'M JUST A PASSERBY.
JUST WANTED TO BREATHE IN THE ESSENCE OF YOUTH HERE, Y'KNOW?
AM I NOT ALLOWED?
OKAY, I GET IT...
ALSO, SCHOOL GROUNDS ARE A NO-SMOKING AREA.
HUH?! FOR REAL?
IT'S A TOUGH WORLD WE LIVE IN!
YES, YES, NOW PLEASE THE EXIT IS THIS WAY.
ARE YOU ALRIGHT, HOTARUKO?
YEAH. .

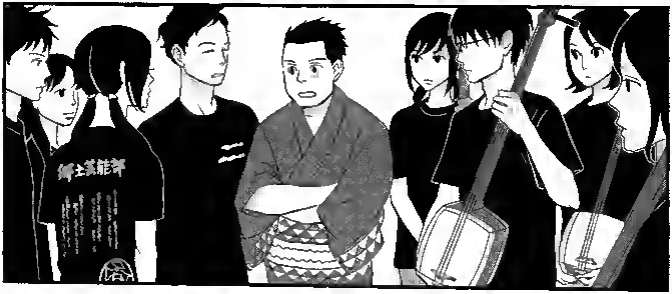
WHO IS HE?
HMM. I DON'T REALLY KNOW TOO MUCH, BUT...
..HIS NAME IS TOGASHI.
EH?
I KNOW THAT PERSON, ACTUALLY
..THERE ARE SOME PROBLEMS SURROUNDING HIM.
TECHNICALLY, HE'S A MEMBER OF YOUR TOWN, BUT
LET'S GO, LET'S GO.
IT'S BETTER NOT TO GET CAUGHT UP WITH HIM.
WELL, IT'S OKAY.
YOU TWO...
OH,

...FINALLY MADE IT.
WE'RE ITCHING TO DANCE ALREADY!
I GUESS SO!
HEHE.
YOUR FACES ARE ALL LIT UP!

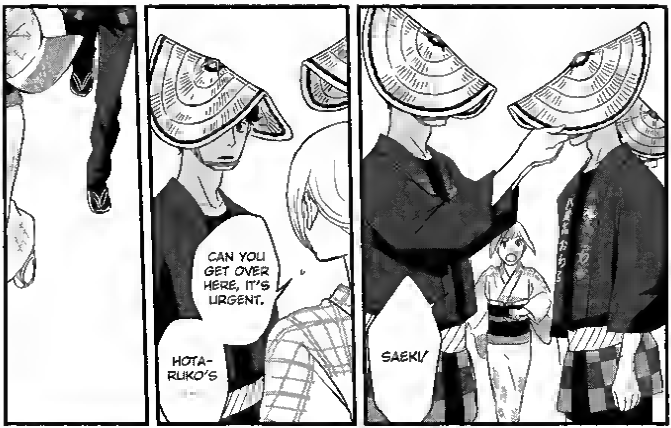
HIKARU,
YOUR GIRLFRIEND LOOKS REALLY GOOD IN A YUKATA, DON'T SHE?
Psst.
HM?
八尾高おわら
HIKARU-CHAN YOU'RE SO CUTE!
I'M TELLING YOU, YOU'RE WRONG-
DON'T BLUSH ON US NOW!
NO, I'M NOT!
HUH?
LOOK, THIS GUY'S STARING!

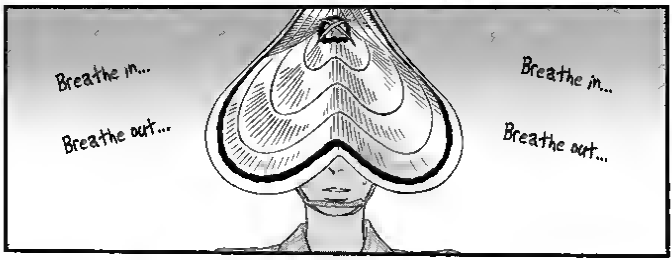

WE'RE GOING UP NEXT SO GET YOURSELVES READY!
IS EVERYBODY HERE?

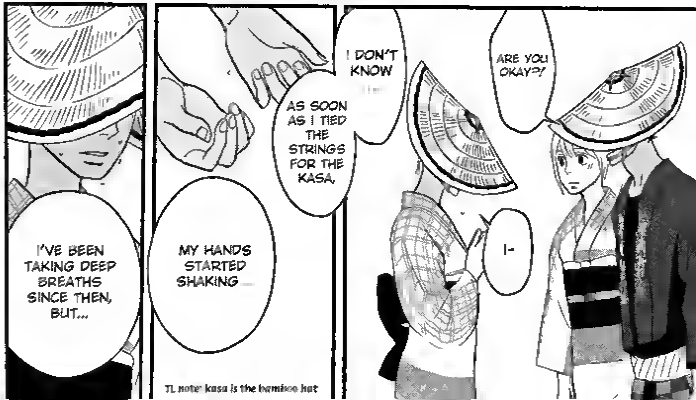
OKAAAY!



HEY... RIO.
HM?
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
I THINK I'M GETTING NERVOUS.
HAHAHA.
REALLY?
..
WHAT?





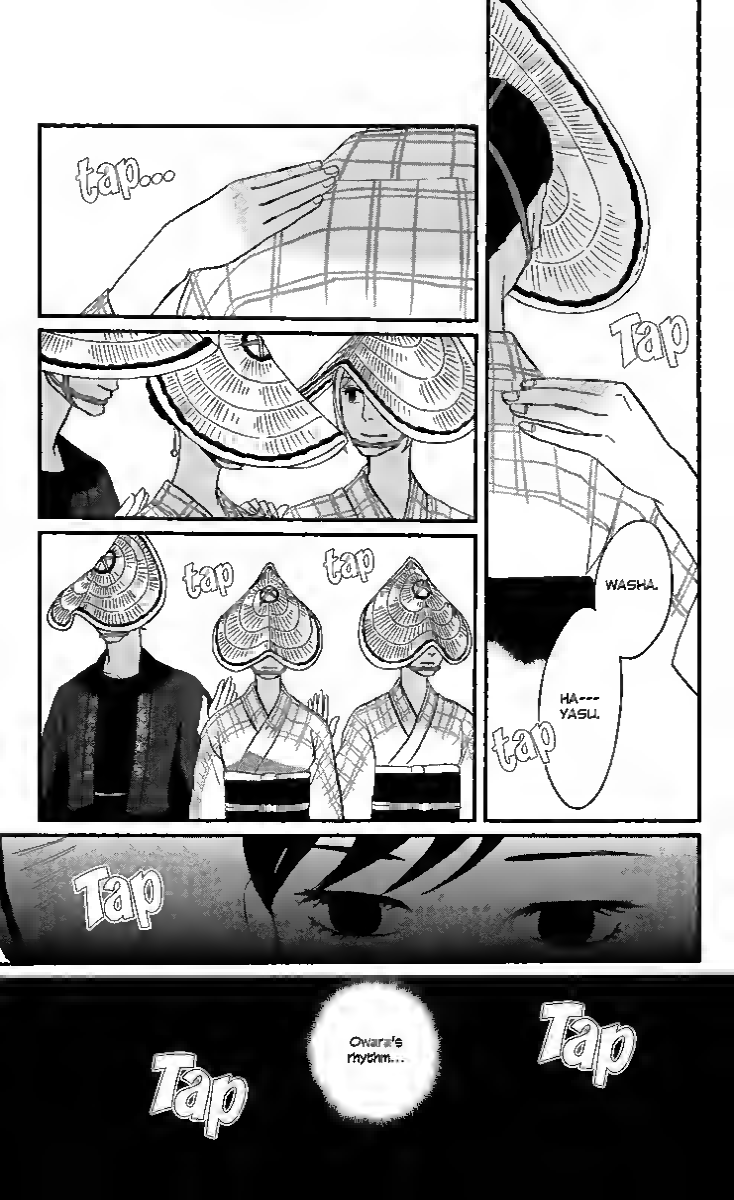

I'VE BEEN TAKING DEEP BREATHS SINCE THEN, BUT...
MY HANDS STARTED SHAKING...
AS SOON AS I TIED THE STRINGS FOR THE KASA,
I DON'T KNOW...
ARE YOU OKAY?!
I-

TL note: kasa is the bamboo hat

THE SHAKING.
IT WON'T STOP .
HOTA-RUKO
I MIGHT NOT
I MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO DO IT
DON'T... DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME YOU TWO GO ON AHEAD
IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE JUST YOU TWO FROM THE BEGINNING, ANYWAYS.
MATSUI-SAN!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING! HURRY AND PUT ON YOUR KASA ALREADY!
UM-
SENSEI, ACTUALLY

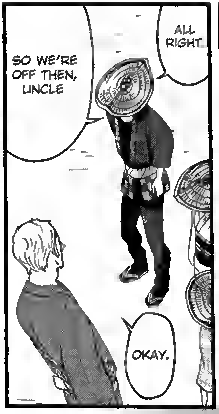
Stop
Stop
Stop
Stop
PUT ON YOUR KASA, RIO
GEEZ.
SHNP!
YOU DON'T NEED TO TELL HER.
DON'T YOU KNOW ALREADY?
YOU'RE A BUNDLE O' TROUBLE, AREN'T YOU?
I COULD NEVER LEAVE YOU BEHIND.

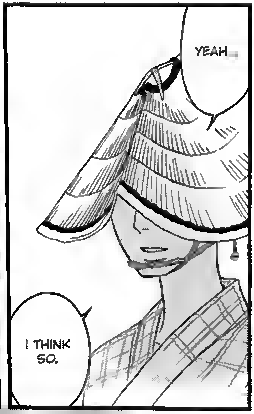
HE'S RIGHT, HOTARU-KO.
WE'RE WITH YOU, SO DON'T WORRY 'BOUT IT.
IT'S A PROBLEM FOR US OTHERWISE.
IT'S OKAY.
HAHA
YUP THAT'S RIGHT.
Tap
LITA-WARE-
YO--O.
Tap
Tap
Tap
Tap
Tap
TL note: Lyrics in the aware


tap...
Tap
WASHA.
HA---
YASU.
tap
tap
tap
Tap
Owara's
rhythm...
Tap
Tap

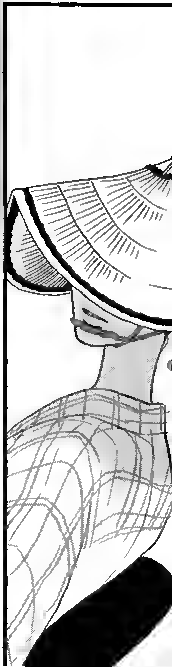
Tap
Tap
Tap
Tap
It's soothing.
HIKARU
IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?
CAN YOU GO, HOTARUKO?
WE'VE BEEN GETTING HER TO RELAX
OH, IT'S JUST THAT HOTARUKO'S GOTTEN A BIT NERVOUS

HOTARU-KO,


SO WE'RE OFF THEN, UNCLE
ALL RIGHT.
OKAY.


YEAH...
I THINK SO.

HOTARU-KO, YOU COMING...



HOTA-
RUKO
WHAT DID
UNCLE
TELL YOU?

ONE,
TWO-!
...AND SAYIN', "DO YOUR BEST."
...YOUR MOTHER IS WATCH-ING
BECAUSE...
IT'S OKAY IF YOU DON'T WANT TO SAY.
NO...
HUH?

Strum!
Utaware~ yo~o
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
Hotaruko's mom is...
...some-where...
...here?
Strum!

MADOKA-SAN?
RIGHT,
THAT GIRL DANCIN' MUST BE MAYUKO'S DAUGHTER. SHE'S THE SPITTIN' IMAGE OF HER.
I SEE...
YOU CALLED ME OUT BECAUSE YOU WANTED ME TO SEE THIS.
WELL~
CLAP
Uta~
ano~
CLAP

Special Thanks

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瀬尾さん　松本さん　吉田さん　濱辺さん

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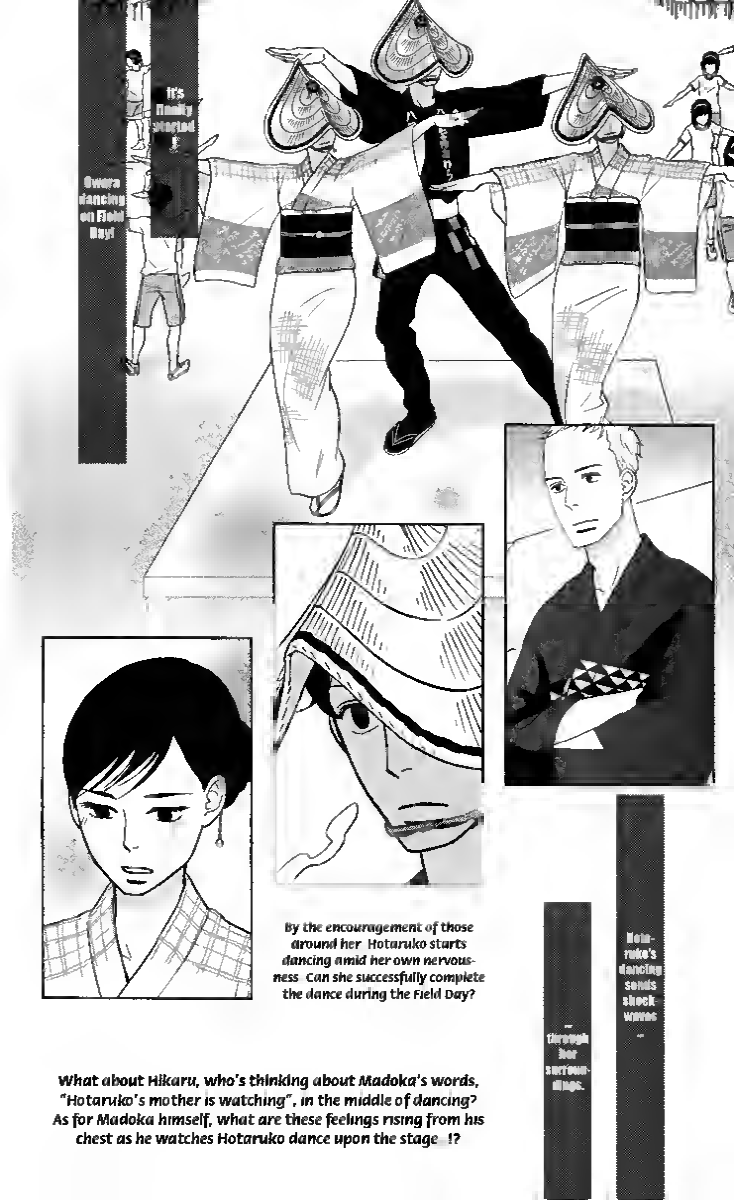
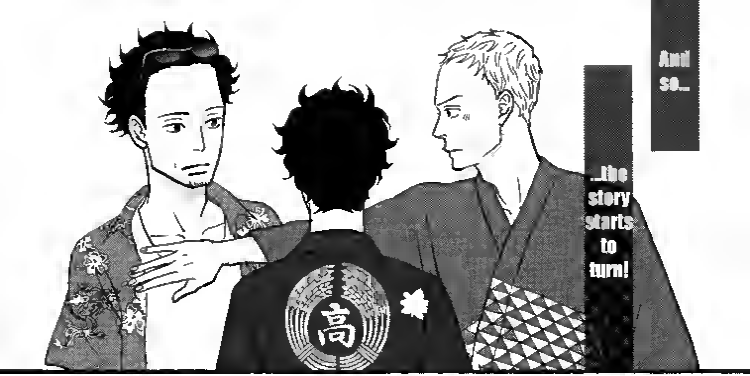
古川克己さん　前崎文博さん　前崎真里乃さん
富山県立八尾高等学校・同校郷土芸能部の皆さん
橋賢美さん　島崎竹虎さん、成瀬高志さん
成瀬翔さん

その他
取材し・協力して下さった八尾町の皆様

読んでくださった読者の皆様へ


Owara dancing on Field Day!
It's finally started!
By the encouragement of those around her Hotaruko starts dancing amid her own nervousness. Can she successfully complete the dance during the Field Day?
What about Hikaru, who's thinking about Madoka's words, "Hotaruko's mother is watching", in the middle of dancing? As for Madoka himself, what are these feelings rising from his chest as he watches Hotaruko dance upon the stage!?
Hotaruko's dancing sends shockwaves...
...through her surroundings.



The strange man, Togashi, who seems to know something.
Will he tell Hikaru Madoka's secret...?!

What is my uncle hiding?

"Tsukikage Baby" Volume 3: The Shocking Truth, Revealed...

月影ベイベ②

flowersフラワーコミックスα

2013年12月15日初版第1刷発行　（検印廃止）

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発行者　丸澤滋

「flowers」2013年6・7・9～11月号掲載作品
連載担当者／指宿弥生（由木デザイン）、河内直弘（由木デザイン）
単行本編集責任者／佐藤礼文
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タイトルロゴ・表紙文字／西塚涼子

発行所　株式会社 小学館
〒101-8001　東京都千代田区一ツ橋2の3の1
TEL　販売03(5281)3556　編集03(3230)5826

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ISBN978-4-09-135589-8

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VOLUME 2 CHAPTER 6

TSUKIKAGE BABY

BY KODAMA YUKI

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FLOWER COMICS α
flowersフラワーコミックスアルファ

2

Yuki Kodama

Tsukikage BaBy

Tsukikage BaBy 2
Yuki Kodama

9784091355898
ISBN978-4-09-135589-8
C9979 ¥429E
1929979004293
定価：本体429円＋税
雑誌 46065-89　小学館

Collected Works "Tsukikage Baby" ②

★She's just a new transfer student, but Hotaruko can dance the town's traditional performance art of "owara" very well. However, Hikaru, who was bedazzled by her dance, knows that she likes his uncle, Madoka. To prevent any nasty rumors from going around, they pretend to go out with each other. Now that he's close to Hotaruko, Hikaru is getting more and more curious about the secret between her and Madoka!?

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Fcαモバイル
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Flowers フラワーズ アルファ
月影ベイベの

Message from the Author

When I finally go to Yatsuo for research, there will definitely be interesting things occuring, and I will call it Yatsuo Wonderland. For me, it is a magical land from my dreams. I await the day I receive my season pass.

月刊フラワーズ
flowers
珠玉の少女まんが進化型
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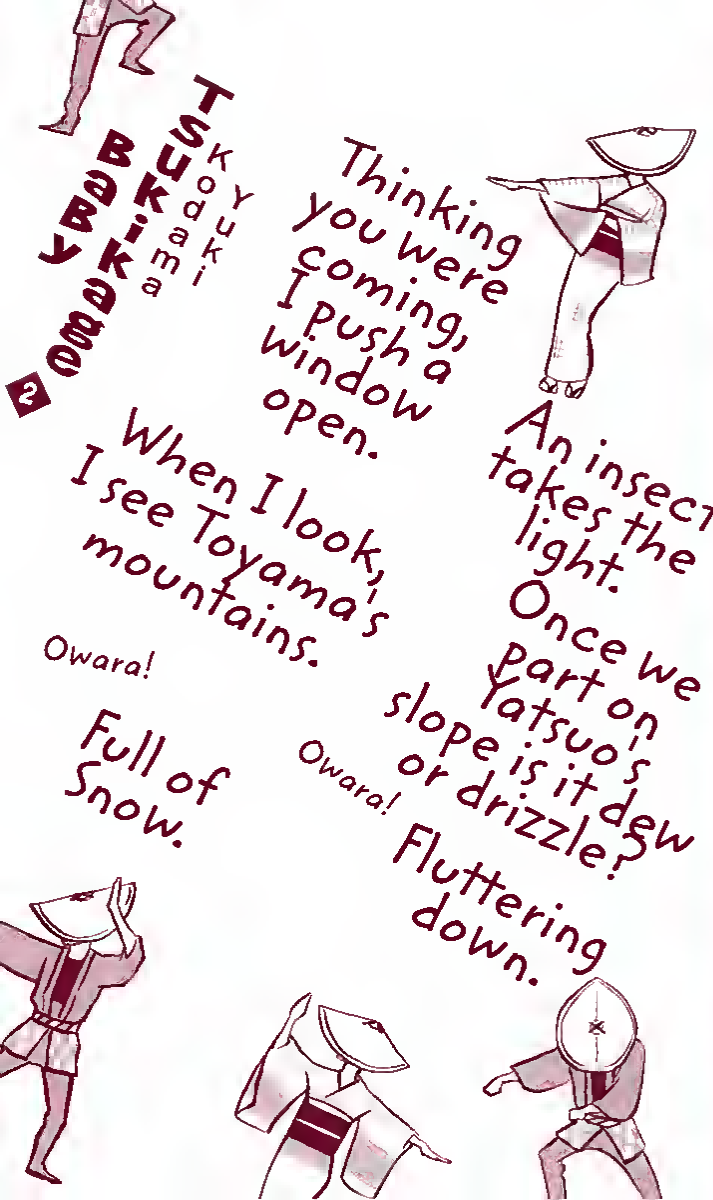
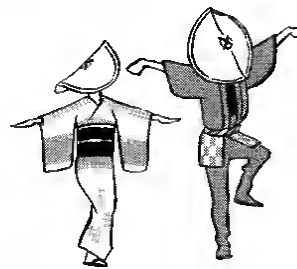

Thinking you were coming, I push a window open.
An insect takes the light.
Once we part on Yatsuo's slope is it dew or drizzle?
Owara!
Fluttering down.
When I look, I see Toyama's mountains.
Owara!
Full of Snow.
Tsukikage Baby 2
Yukimi Kodama

Tsukikage ◆ BaBy 2

YUKI KODAMA



＊flowers フラワーコミックスα＊

Tsukikage BaBy ❷

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*flowers

Characters

Saeki Hikaru

A local high school student who loves to dance the "owara." He's bright and cheerful, but has no experience with women. He's always looked up to Madoka, and frequently visits his shop.

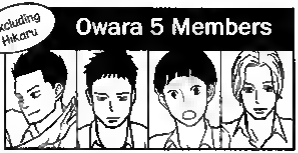
Minegishi Hotaruko

A transfer student in Hikaru's class, she is a girl who dances the "owara" beautifully. She lives with her grandmother. It seems that Madoka likes her. She doesn't communicate much with those around her.

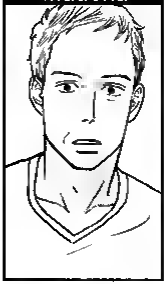
Matsui Rio

A classmate of Hotaruko's who's also good at dancing the "owara." She misunderstands Hotaruko's stage fright as insincerity.

Owara 5 Members



Saeki Madoka



Hikaru's uncle, he runs a coffee shop that also functions as a souvenir shop. It seems that he knows Hotaruko from long ago, but he doesn't want to talk about it. He used to dance the "owara" when he was younger.

The Story So Far

● In a town in the provinces where the traditional performance art of "owara" is preserved, a transfer student from Tokyo, Hotaruko, was caught dancing alone in the classroom by Hikaru.

● He was interested in her dancing, but he was perplexed to find out that she liked his uncle, Madoka. In the midst of everything, rumors about Hotaruko's and Madoka's connection floated around the neighborhood, and to cover it up, Hikaru and Hotaruko started to pretend that they're dating.

● Hotaruko could dance beautifully when she's alone, but she tenses up in front of other people. She started special training with Hikaru to overcome her stage fright, but no progresses so far. Thinking that she was dancing badly on purpose, their classmate, Rio, confronted Hotaruko in the middle of the owara dance rehearsal for the athletics festival. Thus, Hotaruko donned a kasa and performed marvelously in front of everyone...!?

CHAPTER 6

HEY,HEY CHECK OUT THOSE TWO.
THEY'RE WALKING HOME TOGETHER, BUT THEY'RE NOT TALKING AT ALL.
MAYBE THEY'RE BEING SHY BECAUSE WE'RE NEAR?
Gloom
I envy them!
They have a nice atmosphere around them!?
I'm the one getting embarrassed now!
Awww.
Is that it?
...
WHY NOT?
LET'S NOT GO TO LINCLE'S SHOP.
Kya
Kya
Kya
FOR TODAY,
HEY
Kyaaa!
So close!

THAT'S, UH..
WELL...
"UNCLE!"
"I HATE IT WHEN PEOPLE HIDE THINGS FROM ME. AND RIGHT NOW, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT YOU'RE DOING."
O-OH YEAH.
I SHOULD GO TO THE OWARA 5 PRACTICE TODAY.
I HAVEN'T SHOWN MY FACE IN A WHILE, SO.
...
I DON'T PARTICULARLY MIND.
WHY DON'T YOU GO?
I KNOW.
I WON'T GO IN THE SHOP ALONE. RELAX.
BUT IF YOU...
AAH...
Awww
They're finally talking.

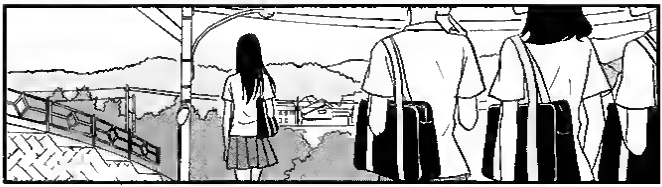
IF YOU'RE LIKE THAT, THEN YOU'RE SURE TO MAKE FRIENDS EASILY
ESPECIALLY IN THIS TOWN
I WAS OUTSIDE THE SHOP YESTERDAY, SO LOOPHOLE
AHH, SAFE...
GOOD!
YOU HAVE A SURPRISINGLY HIGH SENSE OF DUTY.
"I WON'T ENTER THE SHOP IF I'M NOT WITH YOU."
THAT'S WHAT WE AGREED, RIGHT?
WELL, I'LL MAKE IT UP TO YOU LATER.
I HAVE MY OWN SET OF DUTIES TO SEE TO, SO...
AND NOW,

FRIENDS?

That's why I came to this town.

I just want to see Madoka-kun.

I don't really need something like that.



WHO WOULD'VE THOUGHT THAT WE'D BE ABLE TO GATHER ALL FIVE MEMBERS TODAY?
IT'S BEEN A REALLY LONG TIME SINCE WE'VE HAD COMPLETE ATTENDANCE.
NO, NO, NO.

I SUPPOSE...
WHAT DID HE EVEN COME HERE FOR?
SPACED OUT...
AS YOU CAN SEE, THAT GUY'S NOT IN THE MOOD TO DANCE.
JUST LOOK AT HIM.
UNCLE...
AHHH...
I DIDN'T THINK HAVING SOMETHING HIDDEN FROM ME WOULD MAKE ME FEEL THIS BAD...
I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO DO ANYTHING SINCE THEN.
"SECRET" MY ASS. WHAT CAN'T YOU TELL ME?

I WANT TO GO TO A WORLD WITHOUT LIES AND SECRETS..
AH, GEEZ ! SHOULD JUST STOP WITH THIS PRETEND DATING THING.
I'LL STOP GOING TO THE SHOP, TOO

HIKARU..

WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
HMM?
RYOU..
WHAT'S WRONG? DOES YOUR HEAD HURT?
YOU'VE FINALLY SHOWN YOUR FACE AT PRACTICE, BUT YOU STILL HAVE A TON OF OTHER STUFF TO WORRY ABOUT, RIGHT?
SO, YOU'RE FINALLY AT THAT AGE WHEN YOU WORRY OVER THAT ONE SPECIAL PERSON, HUH?

RYOU...
IF SOMEONE IMPORTANT TO YOU WAS OBVIOUSLY HIDING SOMETHING,
AND THEY JUST REFUSED TO TALK ABOUT IT,
WHAT WOULD YOU DO?
IF YOU'RE FINE WITH ME, I'LL LISTEN TO ANYTHING YOU HAVE TO SAY.
THUMP
I ASKED THE WRONG PERSON...
DON'T YOU THINK A PERSON WITH SECRETS IS FASCINATING?
BETTER THAN SOMEONE WHO'S AN OPEN BOOK, ANYWAY.
GLOOM
SOUNDS FUN.
I'M GETTING FIRED UP

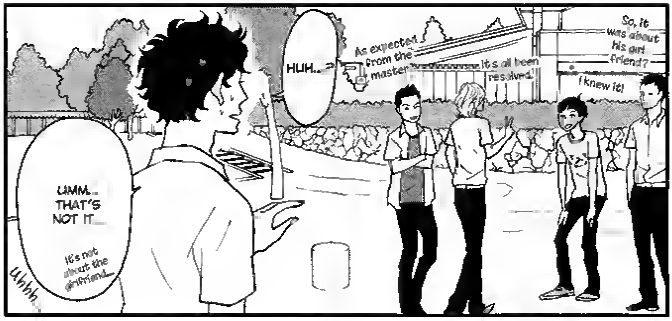
SEXIER?
I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT ANYTHING LIKE THAT.
I'M TALKING ABOUT BEING LEFT IN THE DARK
I'M BEING SERIOUS HERE, OKAY?
THE MORE YOU CAN'T SEE THE PERSON, THE SEXIER SHE LOOKS.
IT'S LIKE THE KASA FOR THE OWARA.
I'M BEING TREATED LIKE A KID..
IT'S MAKING ME DEPRESSED..
WELL, THIS ISN'T REALLY SOMETHING EASY TO UNDERSTAND BUT...
WHAT DO YOU THINK...

...THAT SECRET'S REALLY ABOUT?
DO YOU THINK THAT YOU CAN REALLY ACCEPT WHAT IT CONTAINS?
...OF...
...OF COURSE!
OH, HOW RELIABLE OF YOU.
BUT, YOU KNOW
WHATEVER KIND OF SECRET IT IS
THERE IS ALWAYS THE POSSIBILITY THAT YOU WON'T ACCEPT IT...
...
AND EVEN IF YOU STILL WANT TO HEAR IT DESPITE ALL THAT
WHAT CAN YOU POSSIBLY DO ABOUT IT?
THERE'S A REASON THAT SECRETS ARE KEPT SECRET.
THERE ARE SOME THINGS BETTER LEFT UNDER THE KASA.
IF YOU FORCIBLY TRY TO SNEAK A PEEK AT WHAT'S UNDER THERE, YOU'RE ONLY CALLING ON BAD LUCK FOR THE TWO OF YOU.
AND IF, BY ANY CHANCE...

THAT PERSON YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT,
WAS HIDING SOME KIND OF WOUND THAT THEY DON'T WANT OTHERS TO SEE UNDER THE KASA.
HOW MUCH SUFFERING DO YOU THINK THEY'D GO THROUGH AT HAVING IT TAKEN OFF?
IT MIGHT BE MORE THAN YOU CAN EVEN IMAGINE.

IF THE PERSON IN QUESTION CHOOSES TO NOT TALK ABOUT IT,
THE BEST THING YOU COULD DO IS NOT PESTER THEM AND JUST LEAVE IT ALONE
THAT'S WHAT I THINK, AT LEAST.
SORRY 'BOUT THAT.
OKAY THEN
WHOOPS. WE'VE TAKEN CLAIM OF THE SLIDE.
WE'LL GET OFF NOW.
OH.

HOW'D YOU EVEN COME UP WITH THAT KIND OF PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW?
YOU'RE AMAZING. THAT WAS REALLY MATURE.
RYOU.
THAT'S A SECRET.
ACK...
Why you...
IS THAT SO?
...WAIT...
EH?
WELL, I JUST REALLY PIECED IT ALL TOGETHER.
WITH ALL THAT, IT WAS ONLY NATURAL YOU'D BE ATTRACTED TO HER.
THAT GIRLFRIEND OF YOURS


HUH..?
As expected from the master
It's all been resolved
So, it was about his girl friend?
I knew it!
UMM... THAT'S NOT IT...
It's not about the girlfriend...
Uhhh

Jingle
Jingle
Jingle

HEY.
whisper
WAIT A SEC.
AH.
REALLY? DON'T HIDE YOURSELF, THAT ONLY MAKES IT LOOK MORE SUSPICIOUS.
BUT- BUT...!
Turn
whisper
whisper

HEY.
DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE? I WANT TO TALK.
HUH?
RIO?
RIO...
OH, THIS IS GONNA TAKE A WHILE.
SO I'M GOING AHEAD.
HUH?!
STEP
STEP
STEP
STEP
TURN

SHE'S FAST...
IN ANY CASE...
STEP
STEP
STEP
STEP
WAIT A SEC-
I SAID WAIT UP!
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STEP
STEP
STEP
WHY ARE YOU RUNNING AWAY!?
I SAID I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU!
I definitely lose when it comes to winking...
...WHY?

WHY ARE YOU CHASING ME?
SHOULDN'T YOU JUST GO CHAT WITH YOUR FRIENDS?
I'M NOT A VERY INTERESTING CONVERSATION PARTNER.
IT'S NOT LIKE I'M DEMANDING YOU TO BE INTERESTING
....PFFT.
FUFU.
STEP
Flushed
STEP
STEP
STEP

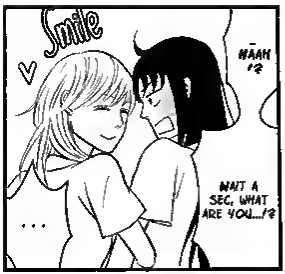
THOUGH, ACTUALLY
THAT JUST NOW WAS PRETTY INTERESTING
YOU'RE REALLY FAST, TOO.
WHERE DID YOU LEARN THE OWARA?
YOU DANCED REALLY WELL
IT WAS WELL BEYOND WHAT I HAD EXPECTED

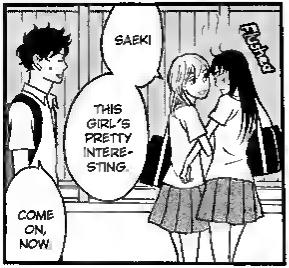
BUT,
IF YOU LOOK CLOSELY, IT'S A BIT DIFFERENT.
YOUR DANCING
EH?!
HOW SO?!
DID I MAKE A WRONG MOVE SOMEWHERE?!
...NO
IT'S NOT THAT. IT'S NOT ABOUT A WRONG MOVE...
IT'S MORE LIKE... IT JUST FEELS KINDA DIFFERENT.
FROM THE OWARA THAT WE LEARN.

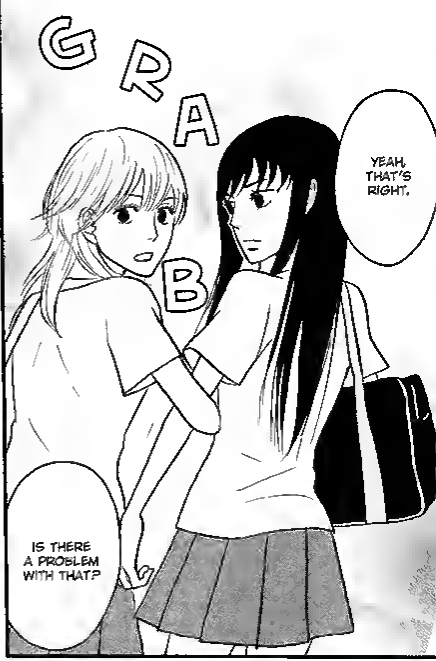
JUST, HERE AND THERE..
W-WELL...
MAYBE IT WAS THE ANGLE?
LIKE I SAID, IT JUST FEELS KIND OF DIFFERENT..
HOW SO?!
AND MAYBE THE PAUSE?
Swipe
ELEVEN TOWNS PRACTICE THE OWARA, AND THEY'VE MADE THEIR OWN TWEAKS HERE AND THERE.
THEY'RE NOT ALL EXACTLY THE SAME, AND EACH PLACE HAS A SPECIALTY, TOO.
Sharing
-AH
WELL, I'M NOT SAYING THIS IS THE RIGHT WAY.

THAT'S NO GOOD!
IF THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE, I WANT TO FIX IT RIGHT AWAY!
JUST TELL ME WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT IT.
YEAH, WELL...
I DON'T REALLY KNOW MYSELF...
EEH!?
BUT YOUR OWARA IS...
SAYING IT'S WRONG IS WELL, WRONG, BUT...
HOW DO I PUT THIS INTO WORDS?
...THAT'S NOT IT.
IT'S NOT THAT I LIKE IT.
I JUST DON'T WANT TO DANCE IT INCORRECTLY.
HEH..
YOU MUST REALLY LIKE THE OWARA, DON'T YOU?

WOAH.
IT'S REALLY YOU!?
HEEEEY!
WHAT?
DON'T TELL ME YOU SUDDENLY BECAME FRIENDS!?
WHY ARE THE TWO OF YOU WALKING HOME TOGETHER!?


Smile
Mmm!?
What a sec, what are you...!?
...


Saeki
Flutter
This girl's pretty interesting.
Come on, now.


GRAB
Yeah, that's right.
Is there a problem with that?

Alright, drinks are on me. Coffee's good?

What? So, it's like that, huh?
Well, the fact that you're getting along now is really great.

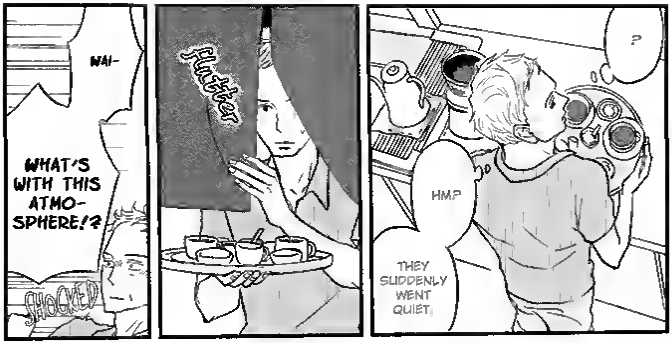
UNCLEEEE!
THREE COFFEES AND SOMETHING SWEET TO GO WITH IT!
I THOUGHT WE WEREN'T GOING TO THE SHOP TODAY?
WELL,
I SUDDENLY GOT THE URGE TO DRINK COFFEE.
THE STRONG, BLACK KIND

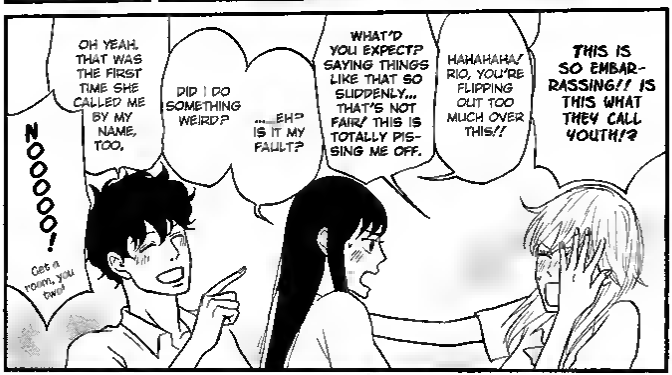
UNCLE, CAN I GO TAKE SOME CHAIRS FROM THE BACK?
OOOH, SEATS ARE FULL, HUH?
Sorry for the intrusion.
HUH? YEAH...
THEN, WE'LL TAKE THE COUNTER.
YOU CAN GO ON AND SERVE COFFEE TO THOSE TWO

THAT WAS A SURP-RISE
SAEKI, HE'S...
ACTING COMPLETELY NORMAL.
HAS HE...
ALREADY MOVED ON FROM THAT INCIDENT?
OR COULD IT BE..?
BUT I'M REALLY GLAD THAT YOU'VE MANAGED TO DANCE PRO-PERLY, HOTA-RUKO.
IT'S ALL THANKS TO RIO BLOWING HER TOP.
EH?

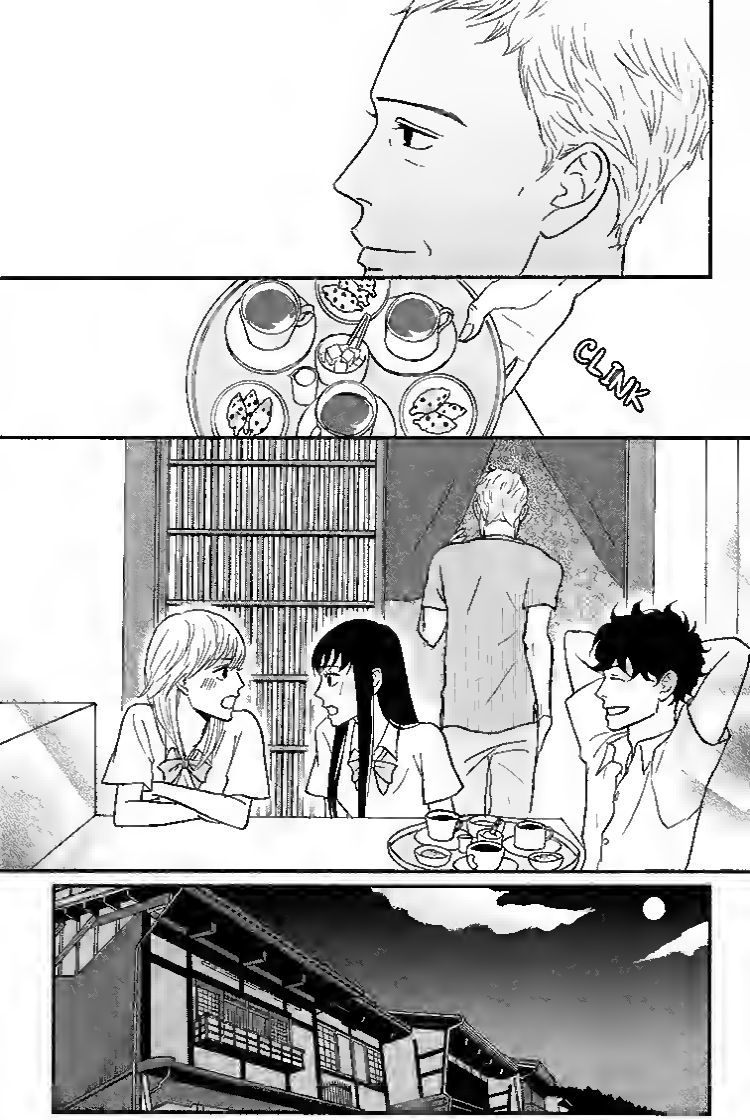
AND WHAT'S WITH THAT IDIOM? I'M NOT A BOMB
I DIDN'T REALLY DO ANYTHING EXCEPT SAYING WHAT I WANTED TO SAY.
I JUST COULDN'T STAND WATCHING THAT ROBOT DANCE
BUT..
IF YOU HADN'T SAID THAT TO ME
I PROBABLY WOULD'VE STAYED LIKE THAT.
THAT'S WHY... WELL...
LET ME SAY IT THANK YOU.

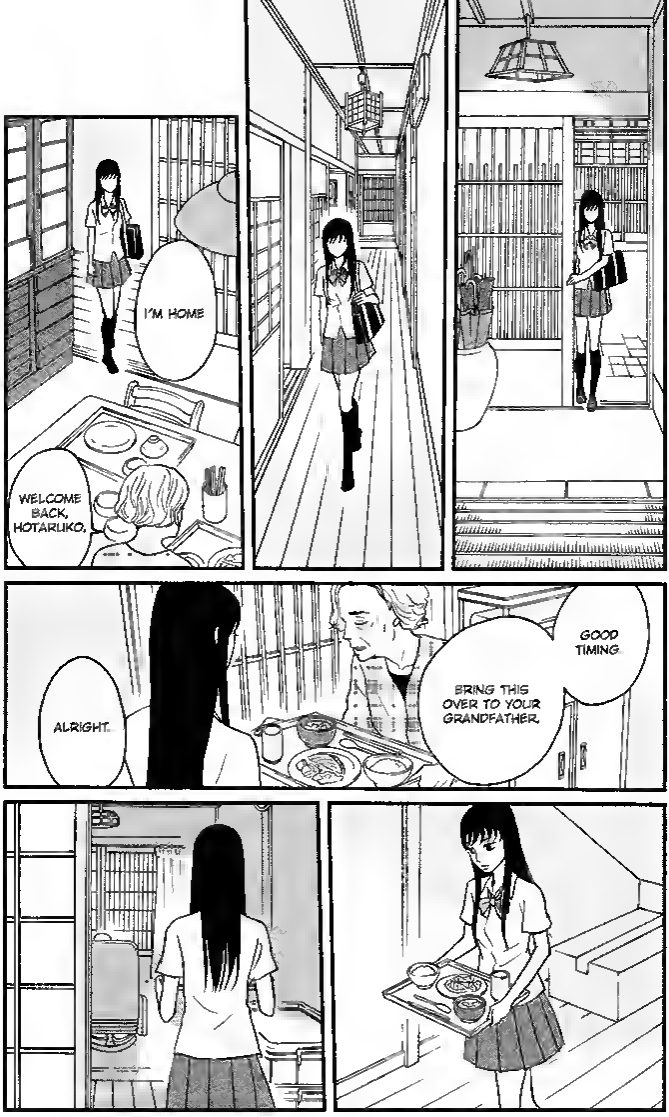
TO YOU, TOO.
...AND
YOU'VE ALSO HELPED ME OUT A LOT.
THANK YOU.
...HIKARU.
Silence


WAI-
WHAT'S WITH THIS ATMO-SPHERE!?
SHOCKED!
Flutter
HM?
THEY SUDDENLY WENT QUIET.
?


THIS IS SO EMBAR-RASSING!! IS THIS WHAT THEY CALL YOUTH!?
HAHAHAHA! RIO, YOU'RE FLIPPING OUT TOO MUCH OVER THIS!!
WHAT'D YOU EXPECT? SAYING THINGS LIKE THAT SO SUDDENLY... THAT'S NOT FAIR! THIS IS TOTALLY PIS-SING ME OFF.
.....EH? IS IT MY FAULT?
DID I DO SOMETHING WEIRD?
OH YEAH. THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME SHE CALLED ME BY MY NAME, TOO.
NOOOOO!
Get a room, you two!

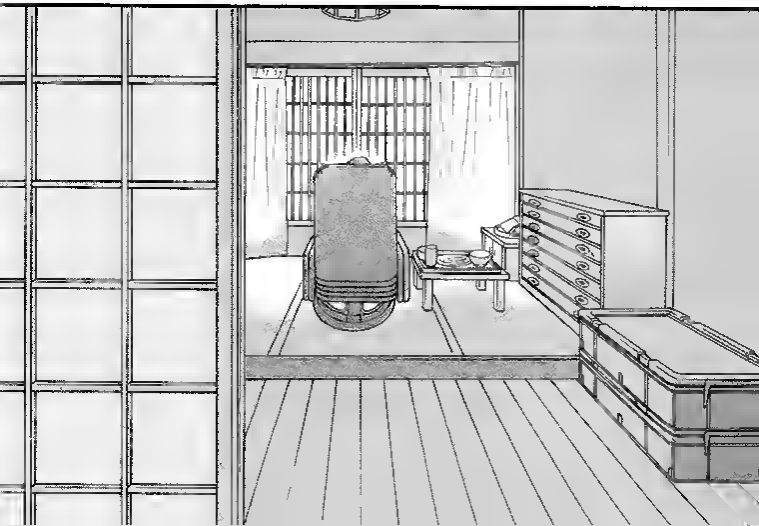
Aha ha ha!
...
Wait, what? What's so funny?
You're teasing me!
If you wanna flirt, go somewhere else!


CLINK


I'M HOME
WELCOME BACK, HOTARUKO.
GOOD TIMING
BRING THIS OVER TO YOUR GRANDFATHER.
ALRIGHT.

GRANDMA WILL BE UP HERE SOON.
I'LL LEAVE DINNER HERE
JUST WAIT A BIT.

Wa
Wa



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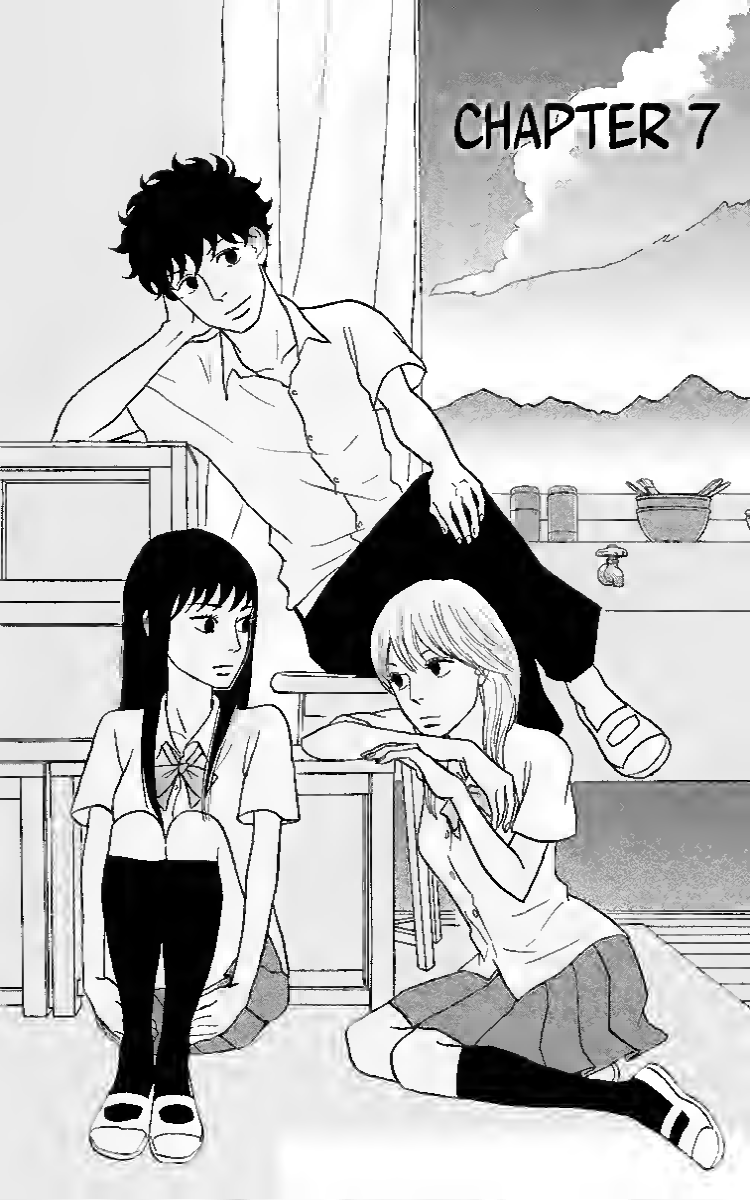
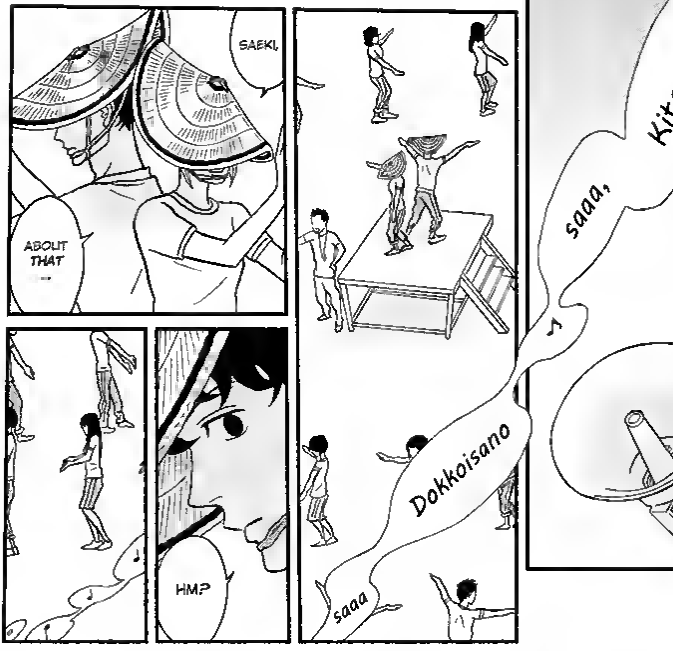
VOLUME 2 CHAPTER 7

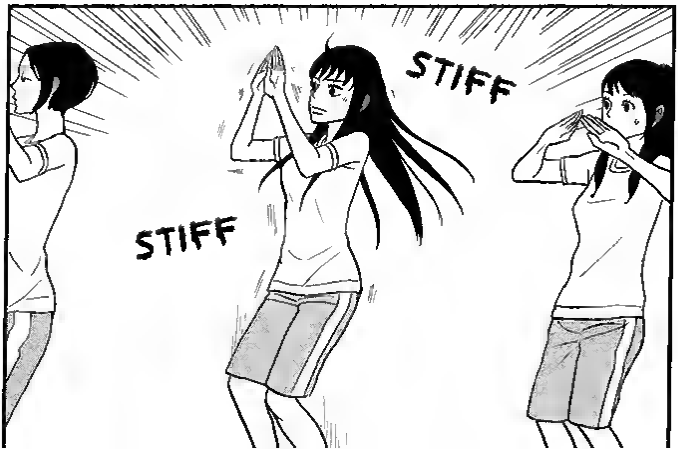
TSUKIKAGE BABY

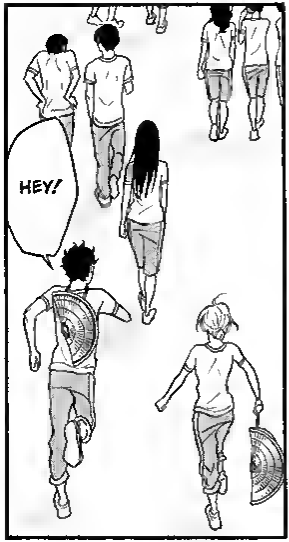
BY KODAMA YUKI

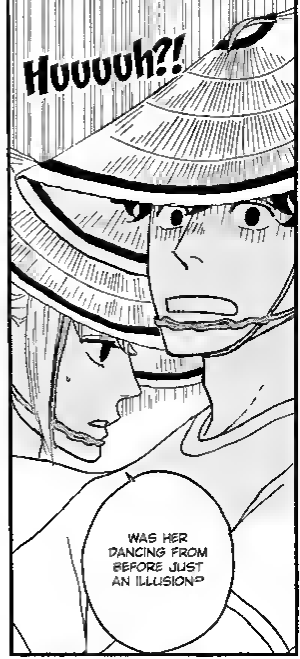
BROUGHT TO YOU BY
stiletto heels
HTTP://WWW.STILETTOHEELSTEAM.NET

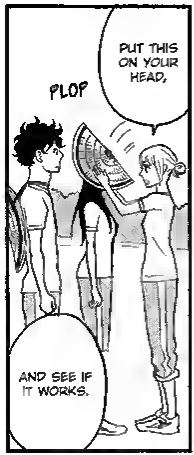

CHAPTER 7

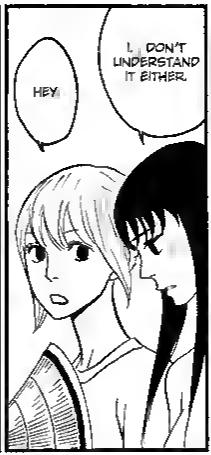

SAEKI
ABOUT THAT ...
HM?
saaa
Dokkoisano
saaa,
Kitasano


STIFF
STIFF

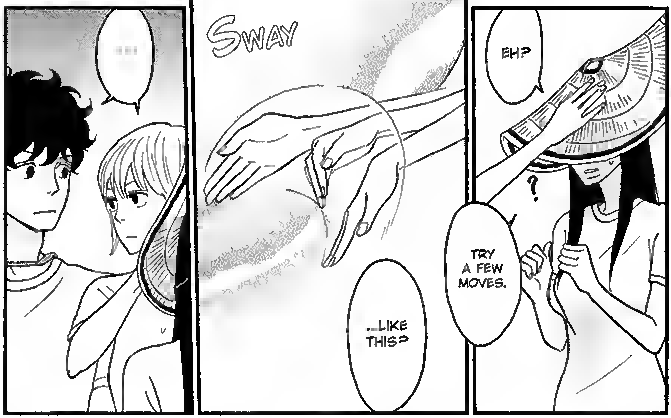

HEY!

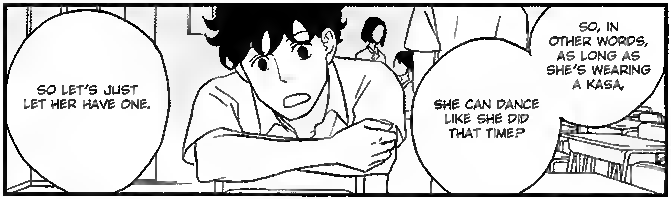

Huuuuh?!
WAS HER DANCING FROM BEFORE JUST AN ILLUSION?

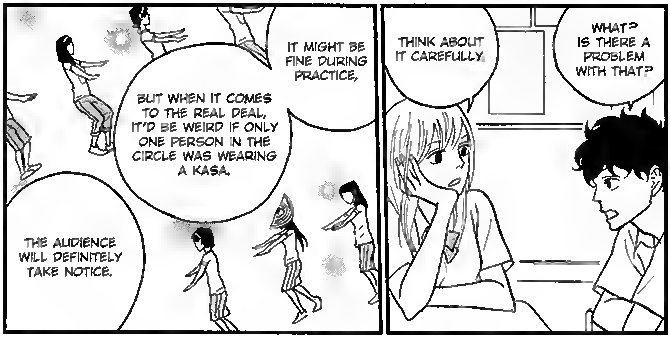

PUT THIS ON YOUR HEAD,
PLOP
AND SEE IF IT WORKS.

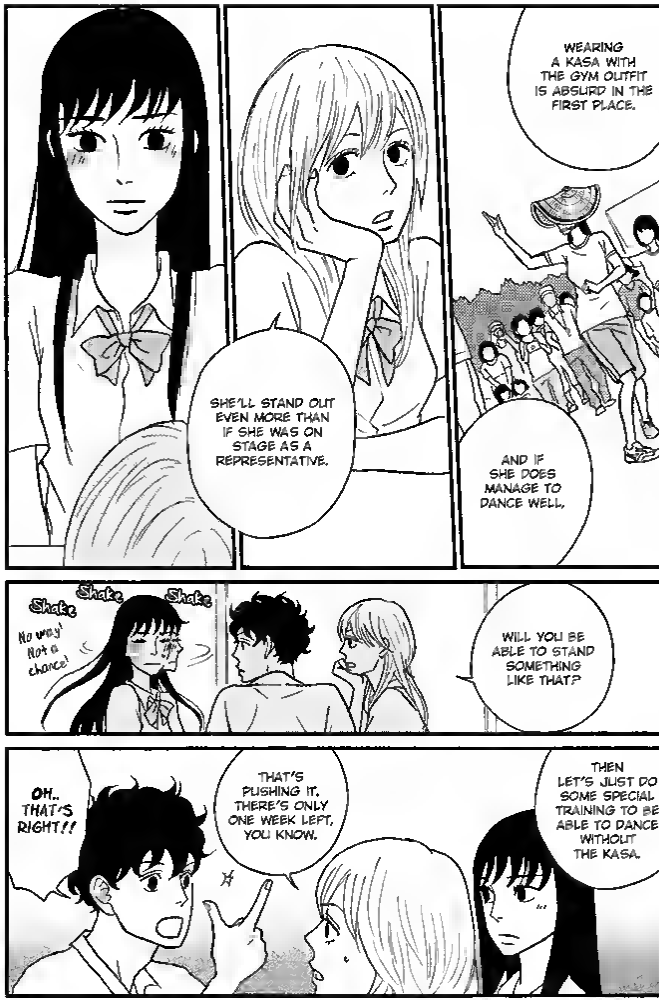

I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT EITHER.
HEY.

WHAT HAPPENED BACK THERE?
AND YOU WERE DOING SO GOOD LAST TIME
...


...
SWAY
...LIKE THIS?
TRY A FEW MOVES.
EH?
?


SO LET'S JUST LET HER HAVE ONE.
SHE CAN DANCE LIKE SHE DID THAT TIME?
SO, IN OTHER WORDS, AS LONG AS SHE'S WEARING A KASA,


IT MIGHT BE FINE DURING PRACTICE,
BUT WHEN IT COMES TO THE REAL DEAL, IT'D BE WEIRD IF ONLY ONE PERSON IN THE CIRCLE WAS WEARING A KASA.
THE AUDIENCE WILL DEFINITELY TAKE NOTICE.
THINK ABOUT IT CAREFULLY.
WHAT? IS THERE A PROBLEM WITH THAT?


WEARING A KASA WITH THE GYM OUTFIT IS ABSURD IN THE FIRST PLACE.
AND IF SHE DOES MANAGE TO DANCE WELL,
SHE'LL STAND OUT EVEN MORE THAN IF SHE WAS ON STAGE AS A REPRESENTATIVE.
Shake
Shake
Shake
No way! Not a chance!
WILL YOU BE ABLE TO STAND SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
THEN LET'S JUST DO SOME SPECIAL TRAINING TO BE ABLE TO DANCE WITHOUT THE KASA.
THAT'S PUSHING IT. THERE'S ONLY ONE WEEK LEFT, YOU KNOW.
OH.. THAT'S RIGHT!!

HOTARUKO, JUST BE A REP.

...HUH?
YEP. LIKE THAT, IT WON'T BE WEIRD IF YOU WEAR A KASA.
ON STAGE, YOU CAN WEAR THE FULL COSTUME AND DANCE. IT'LL BE GREAT!
OH, I GOT IT.
THAT'S A PRETTY GOOD SOLUTION. HARD TO BELIEVE IT CAME FROM YOU. I AGREE.
Hehe
WA!-..

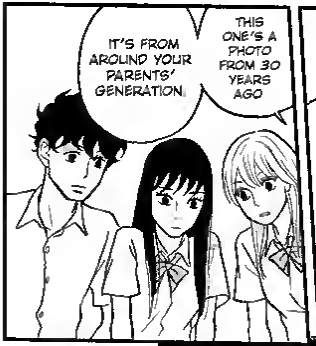
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?!
THAT'S TOO UNREASONABLE! ME AS A REPRESENTATIVE..?
ALRIGHTY! LET'S GO GET PERMISSION!
WAIT A SEC!
THERE'S NO WAY THEY'LL ALLOW SOMETHING LIKE THIS!

IS THAT SO?
WHY NOT? GO FOR IT THEN.
THERE'S A SPARE OUTFIT IN STORE ANYWAY.
Success!
..OR DO WE NOT NEED IT?
IF MINEGISHI'S REPLACING MATSUI, THEN
I GUESS SO
!!
I'M FINE WITH IT.
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN THE REPRESENTATIVE
DON'T TELL ME..!
HUH?
I'M FINE WITH GIVING UP THE SPOT FOR ONCE. IT'S YOU, AFTER ALL.

Rio!
WHAT?
YOUR DAD.
HE'S ALWAYS PUMPED UP WHEN HE COMES TO SEE YOU DANCE HE TAKES TONS OF PICTURES, DOESN'T HE?
WAIT A SEC, RIO
DON'T SAY THAT
THERE IS A PROBLEM IF YOU JUST GIVE IT UP.
UH...
THAT'S ...
WHY ISN'T MY RIO THE REPRESENTATIVE? HUUUUUH?
Please calm down.
HEY, HEY, TEACH, WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?
IF YOU SUDDENLY AREN'T THE REPRESENTATIVE,
HE MIGHT COME RAGING AT US.
THAT'S NOT RIGHT ...
WELL, I'LL EXPLAIN PROPERLY, SO ..
YOU CAN'T!

IF YOU DO THAT, IF YOU STEP DOWN AS REPRESENTATIVE JUST FOR MY SAKE,
THEN YOUR FAMILY WON'T ENJOY IT.
I WON'T ACCEPT THAT.
SO THEN SHOULD I STEP DOWN?
WELL, I'VE BEEN REP A TON OF TIMES, TOO.
EH?
NO,
THE BOY CAN'T QUIT.
THE REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE ATHLETIC FESTIVAL ARE A BOY-GIRL PAIR. THE OTHERS LOOK AT THEM IN CASE THEY FORGET THE MOVES.
IN GENERAL, A BOY-GIRL PAIR IS THE STANDARD FOR THIS KIND OF DANCE.
MATSUI,

HERE, HAVE A LOOK.


IT'S FROM AROUND YOUR PARENTS' GENERATION.
THIS ONE'S A PHOTO FROM 30 YEARS AGO

OH?
A GROUP OF THREE?

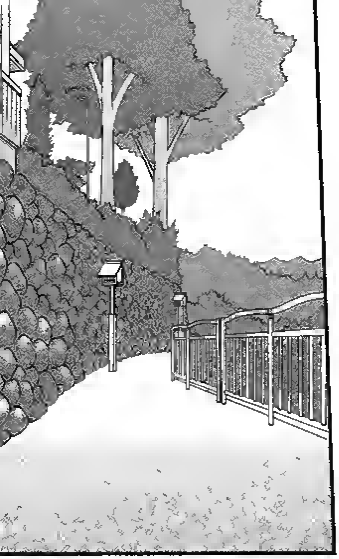
OUR PARENTS' GENE-RATION ...

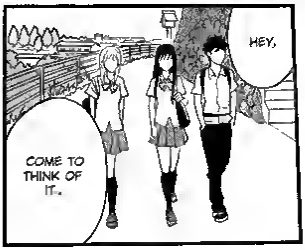
ISN'T THAT UNCLE?!
WHOA, WHOA, WHOA!
WHOA!
HUH?
I MEAN, HE SAID HE WAS A REP IN HIGH SCHOOL, RIGHT?
LOOK THE BUILD AND THE MOUTH IS TOTALLY HIM!
THE ANGLE OF THE WRIST, AND THE WAY HE CURVES HIS FINGERS.
I WATCHED VIDEOS OF HIM DANCING WHEN HE WAS YOUNGER.
I'VE SEEN THEM HUNDREDS OF TIMES, SO I'M PRETTY SURE ABOUT THIS
SO CHOOSE.
THIS GUY HERE
IT'S UNCLE MADOKA FROM HIS HIGH SCHOOL DAYS.

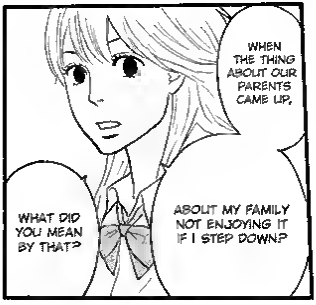
HEY...
I'VE..
...COME UP WITH SOMETHING REALLY GOOD.
...
YOU'RE GONNA SAY THAT THE THREE OF US SHOULD DANCE TOGETHER.
How'd you know?
What else could it have been?
BUT STILL, I DON'T REALLY LIKE THE IDEA.
WITH THREE PEOPLE, DOESN'T IT KINDA LOOK LIKE A LOVE TRIANGLE?
AND THE BALANCE IS OFF, TOO..
NOT AT ALL.
IN OTHER TOWNS, THEY USUALLY HAVE A GROUP OF THREE PERFORMING
OTHER THAN BEING A BIT CRAMPED WHEN DANCING,
THERE'S NO PARTICULAR PROBLEM WITH IT

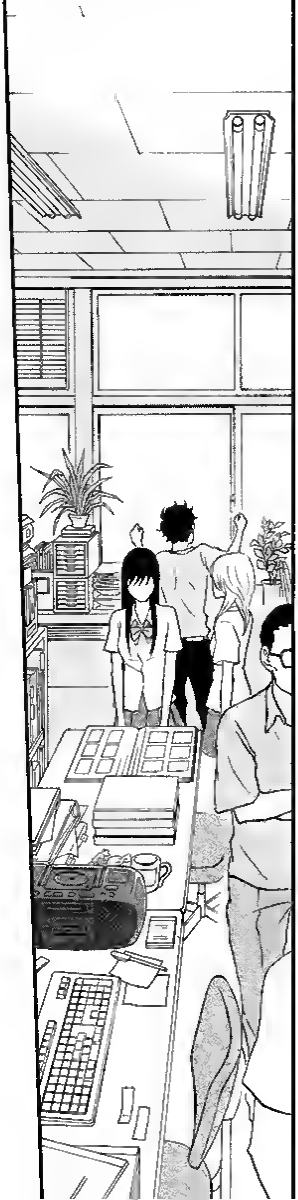
AND I'D BE ABLE TO PICK UP UNCLE'S LEGACY...
Fufufufufu
So that's what you're after
THERE'D BE NO PROBLEMS WITH RIO'S DAD,
HOTARUKO CAN DANCE WHILE WEARING THE KASA.
IF THE THREE OF US CAN AGREE TO DANCE TOGETHER...
SOUNDS GOOD, I GUESS.
Pain!
HOW 'BOUT THAT ?!
FEELIN' UP TO IT ?!
ALRIGHT!
Gggg!
IT'S LIKE,
WE HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE BUT TO DANCE WITH THREE PEOPLE!
SERIOUSLY, THERE'S A LIMIT TO BEING SIMPLE-MINDED

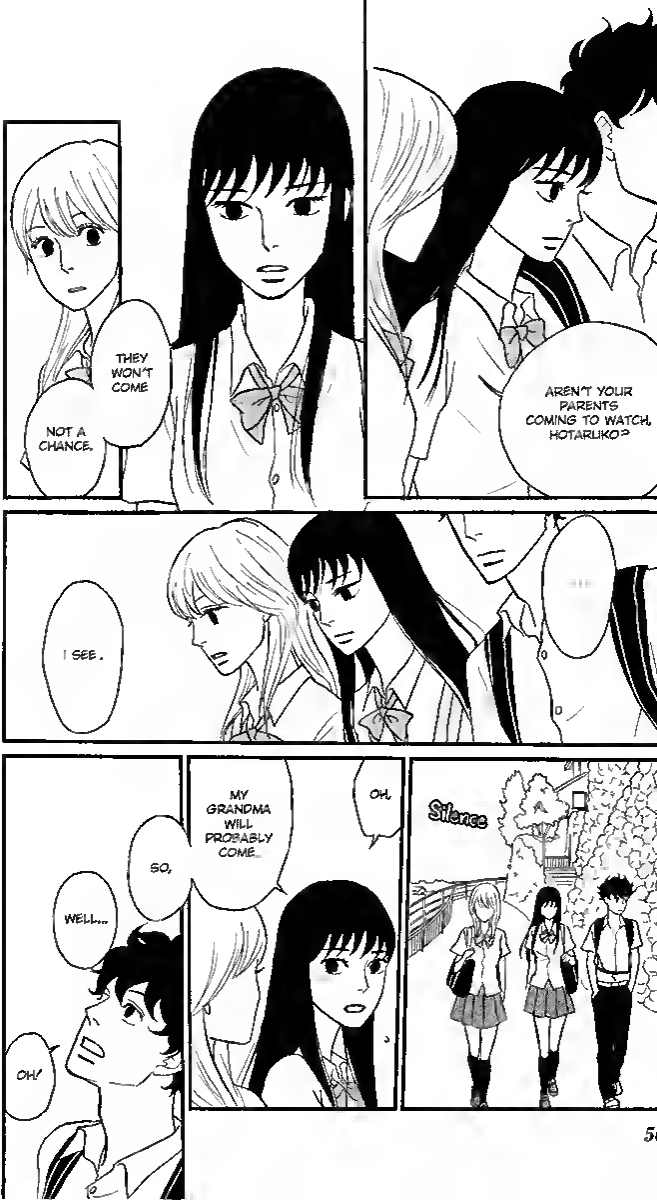
HOTA-RUKO?
WHAT IS IT?
YOU FEELING ALRIGHT?
EH?
YEAH
YOU DON'T WANT TO DANCE AS A GROUP OF THREE?
NO, IT'S NOT THAT.
...
I WAS JUST...
SPACING OUT A BIT.



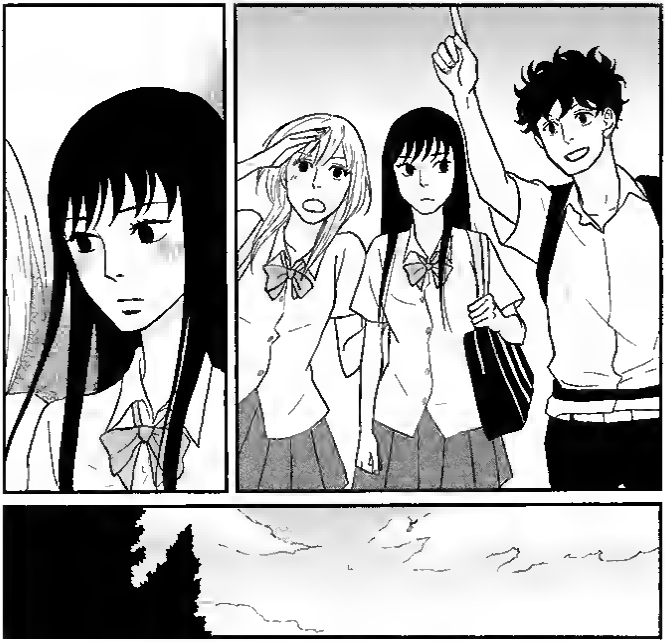

HEY,
COME TO THINK OF IT...

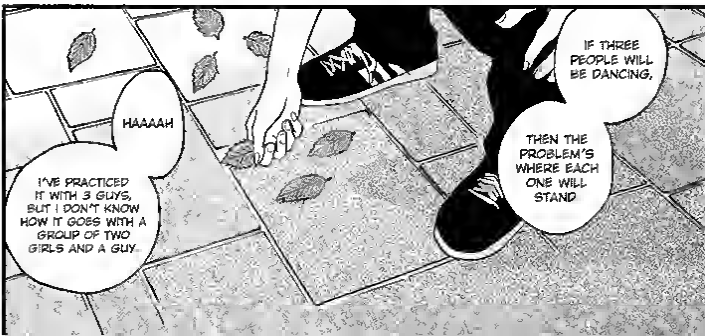

WHEN THE THING ABOUT OUR PARENTS CAME UP,
ABOUT MY FAMILY NOT ENJOYING IT IF I STEP DOWN?
WHAT DID YOU MEAN BY THAT?




AREN'T YOUR PARENTS COMING TO WATCH, HOTARUKO?
THEY WON'T COME
NOT A CHANCE.
I SEE.
OH.
MY GRANDMA WILL PROBABLY COME...
SO,
WELL...
OH!
Silence

THE MOON'S OUT.
AAH! A CLOUD'S COMING TO COVER IT.
THAT'S NO FAIR! WHY WAS I THE ONLY ONE WHO COULDN'T SEE IT?
MAYBE IT'S THE PRICE OF YOUR DAILY ACTIONS?
HOLD UP WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
EEEH? WHERE?
HOTARUKO, CAN YOU SEE IT?
YEAH.
IT'S STILL BRIGHT OUT, BUT YOU CAN SEE IT ALREADY.
HUH? WHERE? I CAN'T SEE IT.
LOOK, OVER THERE.




IF THREE PEOPLE WILL BE DANCING,
THEN THE PROBLEM'S WHERE EACH ONE WILL STAND
HAAAAH
I'VE PRACTICED IT WITH 3 GUYS, BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW IT GOES WITH A GROUP OF TWO GIRLS AND A GUY.

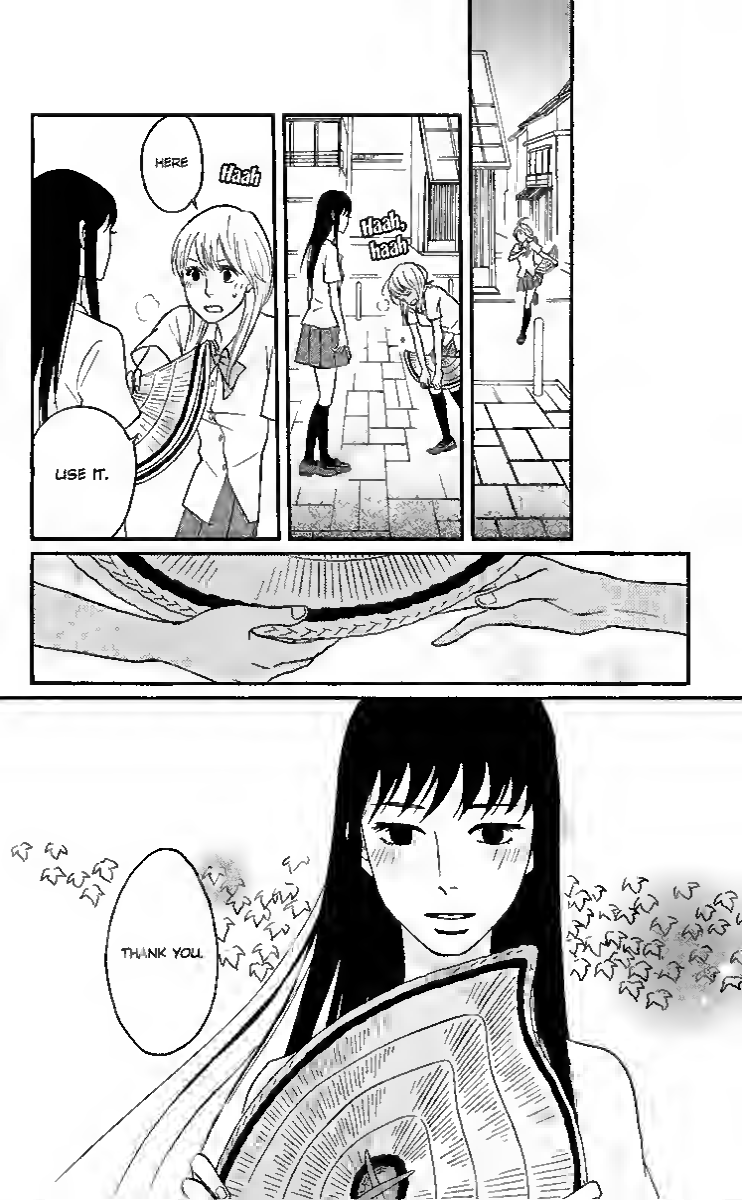
THEN, LET'S START WITH THE PART WHERE EVERYONE DANCES AT THE SAME TIME
I HAVEN'T DANCED WITH A GROUP OF THREE BEFORE.
THEY MIGHT JUST LET US BORROW A BIGGER STAGE, YOU KNOW?
WE CAN LEAVE THE POSITIONING FOR LATER.
GUESS.
LET'S START WITH WHERE OUR BEAT SYNCS UP.
OH YEAH THAT'S GOOD.
THEY PROBABLY HAVE ONE AT THE COMMUNITY CENTER.
I'LL GO GET ONE.
HUH?
NO, I'M FINE...
A KASA.
Oh
WE DON'T HAVE ONE.
SHOULD WE START AT THE FIRST PAUSE?
AH,

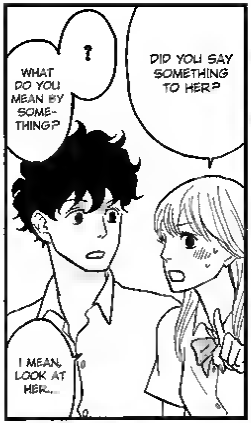
I'M NOT TAKING THAT FROM THE ONE WHO NEEDS IT
THE ONE IN QUESTION SHOULD JUST SIT QUIETLY AND WAIT.
PFFT.
TAP TAP TAP TAP
KUKUKU.
W-
WHAT?
NO, IT'S JUST..
RIO ALWAYS ACTS LIKE SHE'S HER HIGHNESS, THE QUEEN, WITH THE OTHER GIRLS.
NOW, SHE'S RUNNING LIKE THAT FOR YOU. NEVER WOULD HAVE THOUGHT IT.

..HEY, WHY ARE THE TWO OF YOU..
..GOING SO FAR JUST TO HELP ME OUT?
I HAVEN'T EVEN DONE ANYTHING.
IF I TENSE UP WHEN DANCING,
THE ONLY ONE WHO'LL REALLY BE TROUBLED WOULD BE ME
YOU'D BE FINE EVEN IF YOU LEFT ME ALONE.
SO WHY..

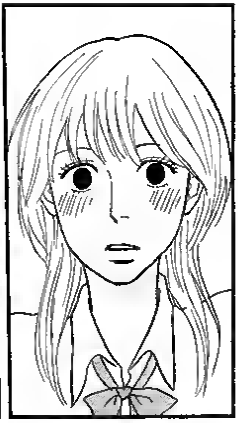
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
IF YOU CAN'T DANCE,
WE'LL BE TROUBLED AS WELL.
WE WANT TO SEE YOU DANCE.
WE WANT TO DANCE THE OWARA WITH YOU.

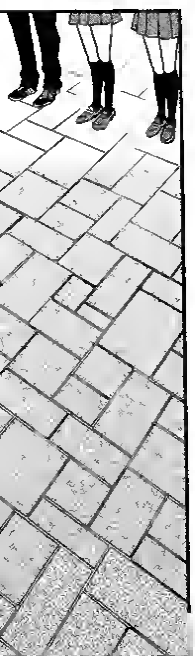
RSTL
THAT'S ALL THE REASON WE NEED


HERE
Haah
Haah, haah
USE IT.
THANK YOU.


DID YOU SAY SOMETHING TO HER?
?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY SOME-THING?
I MEAN, LOOK AT HER...

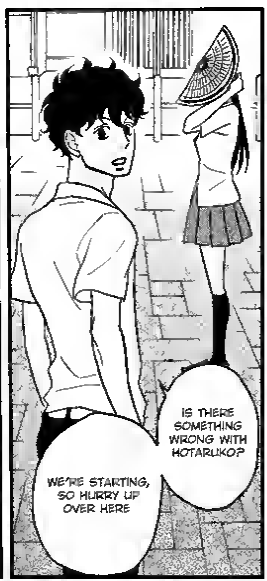
HUH?
WHAT?

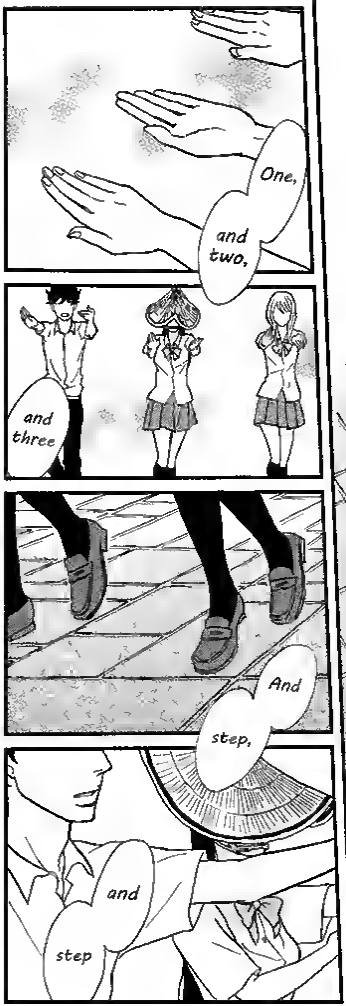




Worries endlessly
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN WHILE I WAS AWAY?
I MEAN, THAT HOTARUKO IS MAKING THAT KIND OF FACE
WAS SAEKI THE TYPE WHO'S FINE WITH THINGS LIKE THAT?

IS IT OKAY FOR ME TO BE HERE...?
RIO, I SAID HURRY UP!
Yeah, yeah.

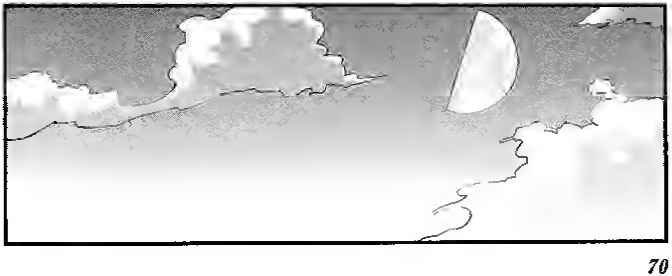

IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH HOTARUKO?
WE'RE STARTING, SO HURRY UP OVER HERE


Aaand,
one,
two,
three,
claps.
One,
and
two,
and
three
And
step,
and
step

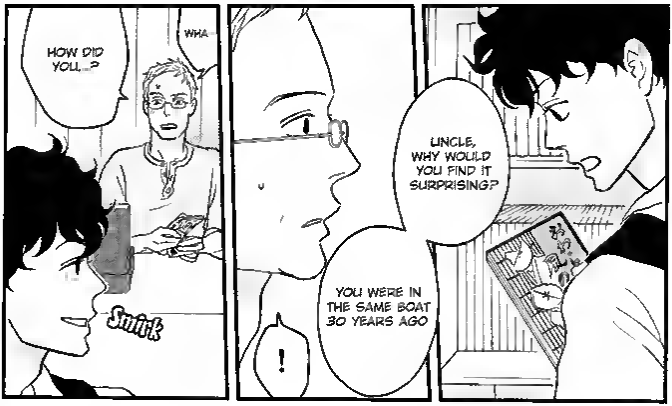
And
step
And..
"AREN'T YOU LONELY DANCING BY YOURSELF?"
"HOTARUKO,"
One
two
three

"IS THAT SO?"
"NOPE."
"IT'S STILL FUN."
"THE OWARA IS MORE FUN,"
"WHEN YOU'RE DANCING IT WITH OTHERS."
"I HOPE.."
"...THAT SOMEDAY YOU CAN EXPERIENCE THAT."
"IF YOU'RE ALL MOVING AS ONE, IT'LL FEEL LIKE THE WIND IS BLOWING."
"AND YOU'RE BEING SWEPT AWAY BY THE FLOW OF WATER."

"IT'S A WONDERFUL FEELING.. "



HUH?
YOU'RE DANCING IN A GROUP OF THREE...?
REALLY? WHY AFTER ALL THIS TIME...?


WHA
HOW DID YOU...?
Swish
!
YOU WERE IN THE SAME BOAT 30 YEARS AGO
UNCLE, WHY WOULD YOU FIND IT SURPRISING?

ACTUALLY, WHY WERE YOU GUYS DANCING IN A GROUP OF THREE ANYWAY?
THEY SHOWED US AN OLD PICTURE IN THE STAFF ROOM.
A PICTURE OF THREE PEOPLE DANCING IS PRETTY COOL.
SO, WE'LL BE DANCING IN A GROUP OF THREE AS WELL.
Heh.
ORIGINALLY THERE WERE SUPPOSED TO BE ONLY TWO PEOPLE DANCING
BEFORE I REALIZED IT, ANOTHER ONE WAS ADDED TO US.
THAT'S THE SHORT VERSION
IF I REALLY START TALKING, IT'LL END UP AS A LONG STORY

WHAT'S WITH THAT?
IT'S PRETTY MUCH THE SAME STORY AS OURS.
AND HERE I THOUGHT I'D HEAR SOMETHING INTERESTING.
HAHA.
SINCE THAT ATHLETIC FESTIVAL,
30 YEARS HAVE PASSED.

THE YEARS...
...HAVE CAUGHT UP TO ME, TOO.